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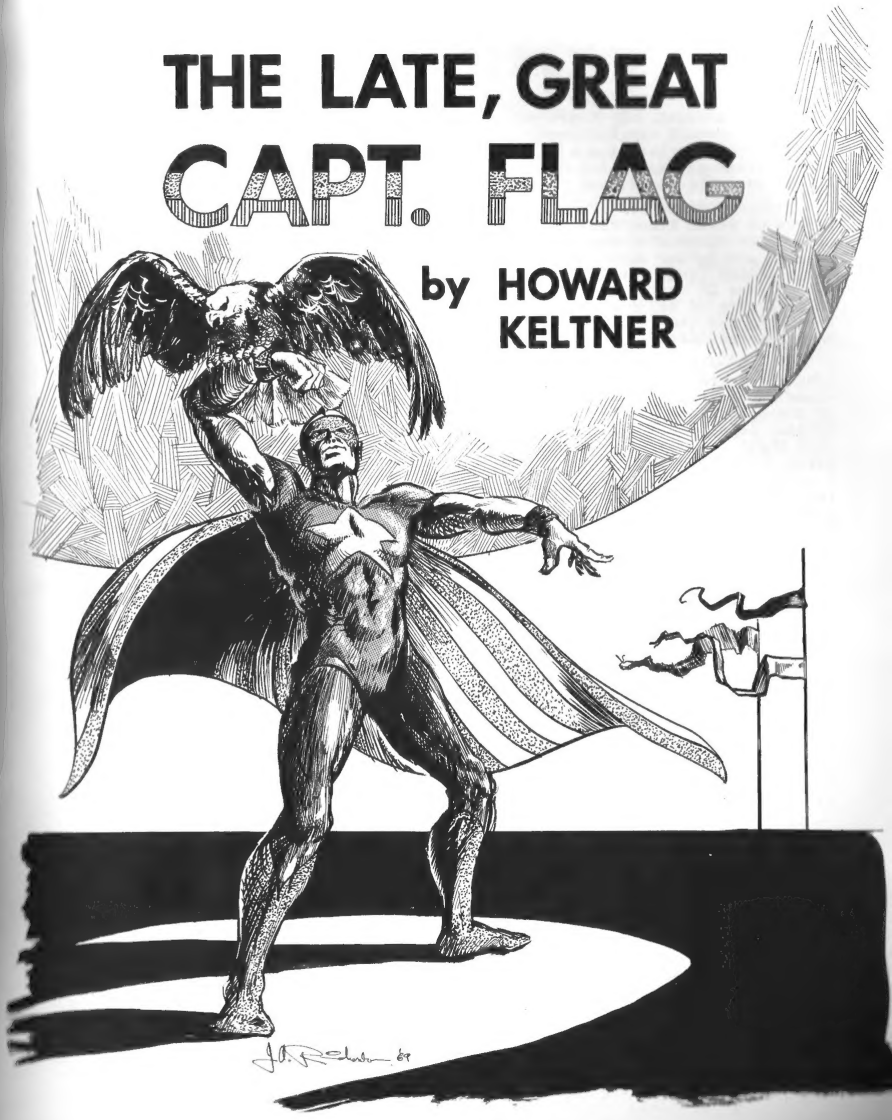
THE LATE, GREAT CAPT. FLAG

by HOWARD KELTNER



Very few of the old time costume characters achieved any degree of popularity in a relatively short period of time. Some of the notable exceptions to this statement are Superman, Batman, Wonderman, Capt. Marvel, The Human Torch, Capt. America, and a handful of others; but let's face it, these are the all-time greats in the field; they established most of the precedents by which the comic world, and the costumed character in particular, exist today.

Of course there are others which fall into the category of the major heroes of their time, but who never quite attained the magnitude of the superstar, like those aforementioned. This list is endless, but some of the most popular and better known are Blue Beetle, Black Hood, The Shield, Bulletman, The Fighting Yank, The Black Terror, Plastic MAn, Doll Man, Sub Mariner, and most of the DC costumed characters. All of these champions of right and justice were of major prominence, but their popularity was slow to be realized; they were not the instantaneous success of the first mentioned group (though some of them were much better characters).

Then there were others. During the early 1940's when a dozen publishing companies were competing with each other to see who could turn out the most super heroes (and, generally speaking, phooey on the quality), there were many of the so-called "also rans" whose purpose it seems was to simply fill the books. Alas, I'm afraid this group outnumbered the other two combined. But from these legions occasionally arose a minor insignificent character who subsequently blossomed into one of the greats. One of the best examples of a costumed character who 'rose from the ranks' is Captain Flag, whose beginning is recorded in the September, 1941, issue of BLUE RIBBON COMICS (number 16). Although his publisher, MLJ Magazines, attempted to give him top billing by featuring him on the cover (along with the other BLUE RIBBON characters) in his initial appearence, it was awhile before Captain Flag came into his own. It must be pointed out that BLUE RIBBON COMICS already contained a star of prominent significance, the weird and highly exciting Mr. Justice, who was popular enough to be included in MLJ's quarterly cross-over of leading characters, JACKPOT COMICS.

In the origin story, Tom Townsend, a worthless idle playboy, was kidnapped by the insidious Black Hand, who thus sought to use him by means of torture to extract certain important plans from Townsend's inventor father, whom he also held prisoner. The elder Townsend refused and in a fit of rage The Black Hand choked the life from him with his diseased hand. His plans now thwarted, the mad maniac turned to Tom with a similar thought in mind. But at that moment fate intervened. A great eagle, lost in the night, smashed through a window into the room, causing distraction and confusion. Panicked by all the commotion, the huge bird fastened its talons onto the first thing it touched, which happened to be Townsend's trousers, and flapped out the window with him.

Carried to the mountain retreat of the eagle and nurtued by it for many days, Tom gradually regained his strength, even surpassing his former capacity. One day the great bird brought back not food, but an American flag, which it dropped at the young man's feet. Considering this an omen, Tom exacted a vow against evil in all forms and fashioned a costume from the banner. Thus was born a new and unique conquerer of crime 'Captain Flag'. Taking the American Eagle, whome he had appropiately named 'Yank', he set out to find the domain of the Black Hand, and a more dangerous undertaking was seldom attempted by a new defender of right on his first case. The lair was located and in the ensuing battle a lamp was overturned, turning the old shack into a tinder box of flame. Captain Flag himself barely escaped,

and he erroneously reasoned that The Black Hand had perished in the blaze. He was to find out later the extent of his error.

Many of the old characters were sensations for awhile, and then tapered off into the rut of insignificance, but it can be said to CAptain Flag's credit that he was one of the few who improved with each succeeding story. Had he not been snuffed out of existence by the abrupt folding of BLUE RIBBON COMICS after issue number 22 (thus giving him only 7 brief appearences) it is reasonable to assume that he would have reached the pinnacle of success at least enjoyed by some of his MLJ buddies. Realizing that this is mere conjecture on my part, I hasten to point out a few pertinent facts that serve to show a definite trend toward Captain Flag-led BLUE RIBBON COMICS: (1) by issue number 18 he had been moved to the first story in the book (which had always been reserved for the prominent characters in all the MLJ magazines. (2) his number of pages had increased, and (3) with issue number 19 he took over the cover, which he had before shared with Mr. Justice. Had he been allowed to continue to develope, I firmly believe he would have eventually replaced Mr. Justice in JACKPOT COMICS.

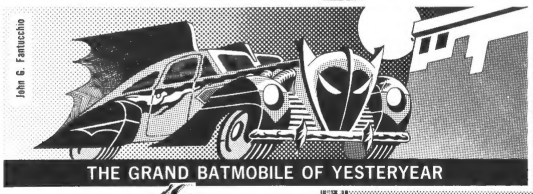
The writer of the Captain Flag stories is not known for certain, unless "Joe Blair" is the name of a real person, which I doubt, but the art work was shared by Lin Streeter and a man named King. Of the two, Streeter was best, although King did some good work on other MLJ heroes from time to time. Captain Flag was the only costumed character drawn by Streeter, who did the origin story and the last four, the final one recording the doom of the scourge known as The Black Hand. These stories, five of them in all (the first three and the last two), involving this most worthy antagonist and certainly one of comics' most viscious, were the high points in this fine characters' brief but colorful career. It would have been difficult indeed for the editors at MLJ to create another villain of The Black Hand's calibre, which, of course, is not to say that they couldn't have done it. I am extremely sorry they were not given the chance.

FANDOM AND THE ARTIST

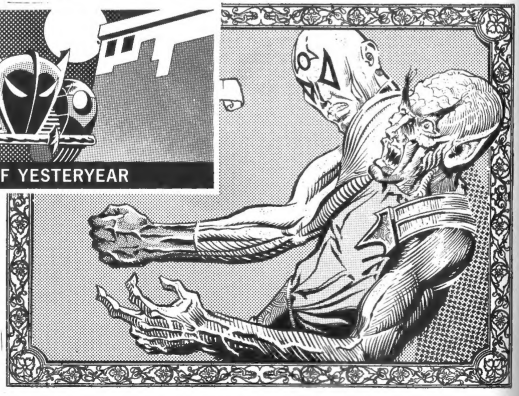
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO

Dynamic Illustrator for Fandom's Foremost Fanzines

originally presented in THE COLLECTOR 13 November '68



THE GRAND BATMOBILE OF YESTERYEAR



EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO

BILL G. WILSON, interviewer

This is an EXCLUSIVE interview with fandom's most popular artist, JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO. This interview took place by mail and also in person, and was conducted by Bill G. Wilson. This is, we believe, the first article of this type about John to come out of fandom. There is no doubt in my mind that there will soon be more. But because we've been first, we think this interview will answer many of the questions you've asked about John, and will provide interesting and informative reading for all of you readers, whether or not you were fortunate enough to see it the first time around.

Bill G. Wilson
Editor of "The Collector"

BGW: Well, John, I might as well begin this interview by asking you when you became interested in comics, and the type you collected.

JGF: Well, Bill, I would say around 1946 or 1947. At that time I collected mainly Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Daredevil, and the Spirit.

BGW: Speaking of comics, what do you think of "The Second Heroic Age Of Comics", better known as the comic industry of the 60s? In your opinion, are today's comics better or worse than those of the Golden Age? (considering script, artwork, printing quality, and amount of pages)

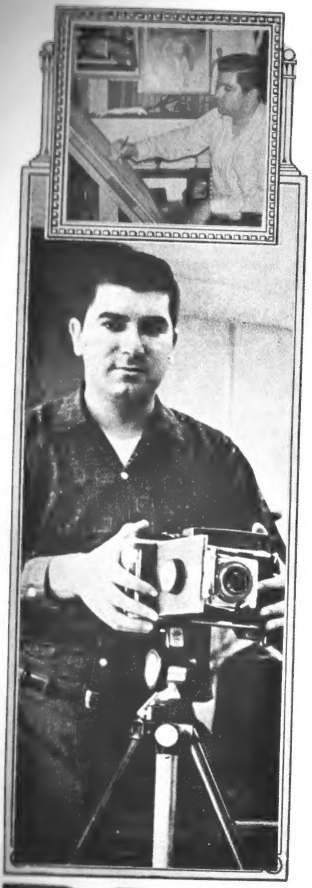
JGF: "The Second Heroic Age of Comics" is probably producing better drawn, better written books with much more thought behind them. Marvel Comics has given the comic industry a well-needed shot-in-the-arm; it's a shame that a few companies have tried to mimic their style rather than searching for a new approach in visual communication. What we would all like to see, of course, is more pages; but with the never-ending rise of cost, it's impossible. The 12¢ ((now 15¢)) comic book is still the greatest value---entertainment wise and creativity wise---in the world today. Where else can you get so much talent, so many illustrations, and a wide range of composition for a dime and two pennies? ((now it's a dime and a nickel: inflation!))

BGW: When did you first become interested in drawing, and what did you learn to draw?

JGF: Well, I think I was born with a pencil in my hand; and at the age of 5 or 6 or 7 I began to make simple scratches which resembled the Man of Steel.

BGW: Did you ever attend any sort of formal art school or take any art course at any time?

JGF: While still in high school I took a couple of correspondence courses, which were a great deal of help. Upon graduation, I attended a full-time art school in Boston, Massachusetts for three years, which covered everything from art history to fine art painting, abstract art, and cartooning.



PHOTOS.

FANDOM AND THE ARTIST

BGW: When did you first become interested in fanzines and fandom, and how did you discover them?
JGF: It was around 1962 that I discovered the Rovket's Blast; and I have been getting this fanzine ever since. During the past few years I've been doing quite a bit of work for G. B. Love.

BGW: What fanzine was the first to feature your fantastic artwork?
JGF: The cover to Rocket's Blast Special #5; it featured an illustration of The Guardian inspired by the work of Jack Kirby. The original is now in a private collection.

BGW: Currently, what are your favorite fanzines, and which ones do you contribute to?
JGF: My favorite fanzines are many - a few are RBCC, The Collector, The Comic Crusader, Bill Spicer's Graphic Story Magazine, Hero Hobby, Spa-Fon, Trumpet, and Gosh Wow! Those that I have contributed to are RBCC, The Collector, The Comic Crusader, Hero Hobby, Gosh Wow! and On The Drawing Board.

BGW: Have you ever contributed any articles, texts, or comic strips to any fanzine?
JGF: Not as yet; although a strip is near completion.

BGW: Would you like to sometime?

SO, IN A TURMOIL OF INTRIGUE AND MYSTERY, THE FIGURE MAKES A VOW TO UNLOCK THE DOOR OF MYSTERY AND TO FIND OUT WHO IS THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THIS STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS PLOT; AS THE NEW NYTEMAN!!!!

JGF: Yes - but only when time permits.

BGW: Are there any other fields besides comics that particularly interest you? (like science fiction, fantasy, sword and sorcery, etc.)
JGF: I would like to do full color cover illustrations for paperback books or magazines such as Creepy dealing with fantasy or sword and sorcery.

BGW: Besides reading comics and fanzines and contributing to fanzines, do you have any other hobbies?
JGF: Collecting old radio tapes, old radio giveaways, illustrations by particular illustrators that I admire - Ben Stahl, for one; Norman Rockwell, Frank Frazetta - these are usually full color illustrations. I'm also compiling information for a book on the history of the comics.

BGW: If it is within my rights to ask, what is your profession?
JGF: An illustrator - which encompasses just about every form of illustration you can think of, using various media such as pen and ink, watercolor, cassein, acrylics, oils, etc. It's alot of fun.

BGW: Have you ever considered going into the comic book field? Do you plan to sometime in the future?
JGF: Well, Bill, I've thought of it for quite some time; in fact, it was one of my goals a number of years ago; but somehow or other I got sidetracked and landed in the commercial art field; but the desire is still there - I'm ready, willing, and (I think) able. So who knows -- perhaps in the near future.

FANDOM AND THE ARTIST

sketched from a photograph of BUSTER (Flash Gordon) CRABBE.

BGW: Of all the comic-related artists around today, who is your all-time favorite?

JGF: This is a very hard question, mainly because I have a great many favorites for various reasons. All of these men have been individualists and highly creative: Kubert, Ditko, Meskin, Raboy, Crandell, Williamson, Eisner, Kirby, Raymond, Foster, Wood, Frazetta, Adams, Hogarth, Kane. All these men have had a great deal to say in their work, but perhaps the one whom I really relate most to is Alex Raymond.
((I must agree. Raymond is truly one of comicdom's greatest artists. --interviewer))

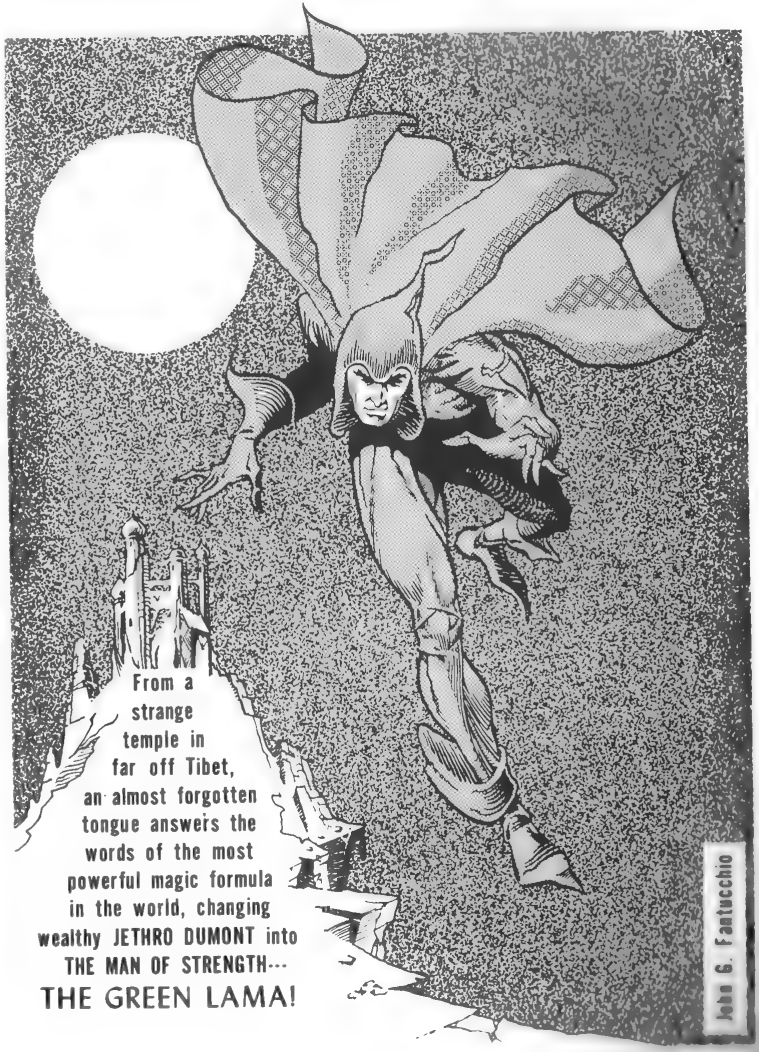
BGW: Are there any particular years or companies that you collect?

JGF: I'm just trying to complete a few titles-almost anything by Mac Raboy, Capt. Marvel, Jr. especially; Superman-I just need a few of these; Batman, Captain Marvel, The Spirit, works of Frazetta, early Jack Kirby; and EC comics, of course. If there's anyone out there who has original artwork by Mac Raboy, I'd like to hear from him.

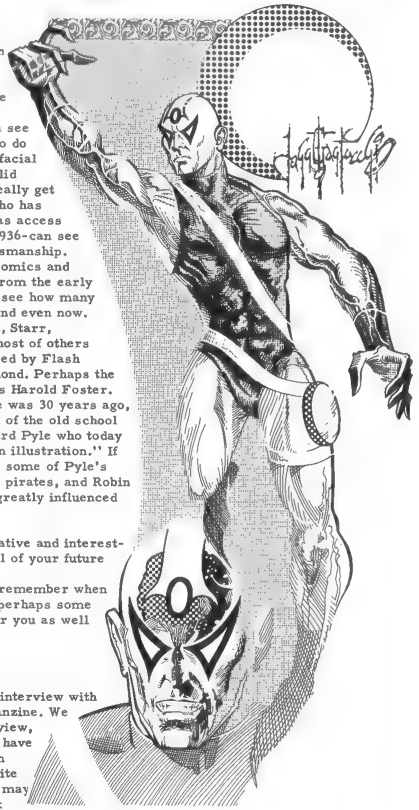
BGW: What company is, in your opinion, the best all-around company? (considering, of course, artists, writers, layout, etc.) Or would you say it is a rivalry between companies?

JGF: At the moment, I would say there is no 'best' company. Gold Key has put out some excellent stories and exceptional artwork; Tarzan by Manning was superb, as was Robot Fighter; Torak has been magnificently executed all these years, and the same artist, Giolitti, has handled many other titles - Gunsmoke, Have Gun Will Travel, Jungle Jim, a terrific job on Tonto - he's definitely one of my favorites, and it seems to me he has received no recognition in fandom, which is really a shame. One would be wise to study his work. Perhaps DC might have the edge right now, with Neal Adams doing so much of their work. I think his work will be sought after in years to come as the best contemporary style he's fresh and has tons of imagination, beautiful composition and perspective. Marvel has perhaps too many disciples of Kirby, but the two that really turn me on at Marvel at this moment are John Buscema and Gene Colan; these two are completely different from each other and the rest of bullpen; perhaps the reason I like Buscema's work is that he is following in the footsteps of Burne Hogath & Gil Kane.

OM MANI PADME HUM!


From a strange temple in far off Tibet, an almost forgotten tongue answers the words of the most powerful magic formula in the world, changing wealthy JETHRO DUMONT into THE MAN OF STRENGTH---
THE GREEN LAMA!
John G. Fantucchio

FANDOM AND THE ARTIST



BGW: Just one more question, John, before we close. What, in your opinion is the best all-time comic strip ever published?

JGF: I've got to say Flash Gordon. You've really got to see all of Raymond's work and study it intensely; you can see the different things that he's tried to do with Flash with his accented lines, facial expressions, his beautiful use of solid blacks; and story-wise you never really get tired of reading it. I think anyone who has seen the Nostalgia Press book or has access to some very early strips-around 1936-can see for himself the high quality of draftsmanship. Take a look at some of your older comics and compare some of the illustrations from the early Flash Gordon, and you'll be able to see how many imitators there were at that time, and even now. Today we have men like Williamson, Starr, MacWilliams, Wood, Atkins, and a host of others who have been inspired and influenced by Flash Gordon and the works of Alex Raymond. Perhaps the only other man who can equal him is Harold Foster. He's still drawing as well now as he was 30 years ago, although his work is in the tradition of the old school of illustrators, beginning with Howard Pyle who today is known as "the father of American illustration." If you're lucky enough to come across some of Pyle's books that he wrote on King Arthur, pirates, and Robin Hood, you can see how Foster was greatly influenced by this man.

BGW: Thank you, John, for a most informative and interesting interview; and best of luck on all of your future endeavors.

JGF: It's been my pleasure, Bill. I can't remember when I've enjoyed anything so much; and perhaps some day you'll let me write an article for you as well as featuring my illustrations.

Well, readers, there you have it; the first interview with John G. Fantucchio to be featured in any fanzine. We sincerely hope you have enjoyed this interview, and that it answers any questions you may have asked about John. Any and all comments on this interview will be welcomed; so we invite you to send in any comments or views you may have, whether they be pro or con. We think this interview is a success, and we sincerely hope that you too feel the same way.

"FANDOM AND THE ARTIST": An Exclusive Interview With John G. Fantucchio, was originally presented in "The Collector" #13, November 1968. Layout preparation, re-typing, editorial comments, and interviewing done by Bill G. Wilson, editor of "The Collector". Your comments are appreciated. Send them to: THE [illegible] and/or THE COLLECTOR, c/o Bill G. Wilson/1535 Oneida Dr./Clairton, Pa. 15025

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STEVE HANSON, INTREPID AGENT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS BATTLES THE GREATEST THREAT THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.. THE INVASION FROM THE ABYSS!
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WHEN SHELIA VERNOW IS MADE FLAME GODDESS BY A SAVAGE INDIAN TRIBE, SHE FINDS HER FIRST SACRED DUTY IS TO SACRIFICE THE MAN SHE LOVES...
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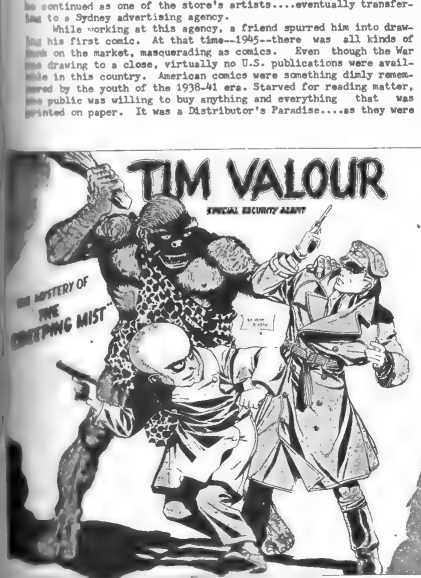
JOHN DIXON

With the possible exception of "Frontiers Of Science", the most successful comic strip to come out of Australia is "AIR HAWK-And The Flying Doctors". This strip comes from the pen of Australia's most prolific comic book/strip artist...John Dixon. Certainly, AIR HAWK can't boast of the same high circualtion figures as Prince Baliant, Steve Canyon, Dick Tracy and other legendary newspaper stalwarts but, in its own quiet way, it is steadily climbing towards world-wide recognition.

Who is John Dixon...and what was the path that lead him to discover the magic formula of what makes a strip "click"??

Born in Newcastle, N.S.W., Dixon never set out with the intention of becoming a comic strip artist. In fact, his first job was that of a Window Dresser in a store in his hometown. While learning this trade, he became friendly with the store's advertising artist. When this artist indicated that he intended leaving, the young Dixon borrowed some of his artwork...burned the midnight Oil...and made copies of this work. The artist handed in his notice, so Dixon produced his samples and applied for the job. He was given the nod of approval and directed to work with the other artist until such times as he left. As things turned out, he didn't leave...but Dixon never returned to Window Dressing. Instead, he continued as one of the store's artists....eventually transferring to a Sydney advertising agency.

While working at this agency, a friend spurred him into drawing his first comic. At that time--1945--there was all kinds of trash on the market, masquerading as comics. Even though the War was drawing to a close, virtually no U.S. publications were available in this country. American comics were something dimly remembered by the youth of the 1938-41 era. Starved for reading matter, the public was willing to buy anything and everything that was printed on paper. It was a Distributor's Paradise....as they were rarely troubled with "returns".



It was into this market that Dixon was "pushed" by his friend ...a friend who insisted that Dixon "could draw better comics than most of the stuff on the market". And he was right! Dixon could draw better comics than most--although his first attempt will never go down in history as a comic book masterpiece.

This first-ever effort was called "SKY PIRATES" and, with it tucked under his arm, Dixon set sail for Frank Johnson Publication Company--one of the biggest comic publishers of the day. As fate would have it, on his journey to the Johnson office, Dixon had to pass through Bond Street...a narrow, little street that contains the office of H. John Edwards, publisher of Action Comics Pty Ltd. Dixon never did get to see Frank Johnson as Edwards offered him a substantial increase of $4.00 per week (and in 1945 that was asubstantial increase!) to draw comics exclusively for Action. Thus started a long and happy association between Dixon and Edwards.... an association that is fondly remembered by Dixon to this day.

Dixon's first task was to create an adventure character with continuity potential. And so, at the age of 16,John Dixon produced his first issue of TIM VALOUR-Air Ace-Special Investigator--Defender of the Peace-Special Security Agent-Commander of the Tiger-hawk S-uadron. Of course, Tim didn't play all these roles at the one time...he advanced from one to the other as Dixon matured. As could only be expected of one se inexperienced, the early Tim Valour stories followed the standard adventure plots of the day. Even at this tender age, Dixon wrote his own storyline...something that hasn't altered in almost 21 years of producing comics. In those early episodes, Dixon yielded to the temptations that must face all buddind, teen-age artists...he allowed his brainchild to jump from one fantastic adventure to another....without any thoughtof establishing character, personal traits or motivation. Tim was something of a Shining Knight...and if he didn't possess any White Armour he was, none the less, well equipped with ultra-modern diving gear...a set of blast pistols...even a rocket ship. In the rocket ship adventure, Tim flew to a mysterious planet (with his sweetheart, Ann Darling, for company...and only the robot controlss to act as chaperone!) where he disposed of a "beast man" and a "scaly monster" before exploding an Atomic Bomb, thus saving earth from some form of deadly rays! It was "kid's stuff"....but, then, it was only being written by an overgrown kid.

The artwork in the first 7 or 8 issues was of a "cartoony" nature...no doubt due to the influence of the Superman artists of that period. At this early stage in his career, Dixon found this style the easiest to grasp.

When Dixon worked off his flights of fancy,Tim Valour settled down as earth's one-man riot squad against the forces of evil. And there were some "evil" characters that drifted in and out of Tim's comic book life. Apart from the standard, run-of-the-mill gangsters, Tim was challenged by, and disposed of, such nasty pieces of work as...The Vulture (TV #5)...The Scar (TV #8)...The Ghost (T V #11)...Otto Kratz (TV #14)...The Mongol (TV #15)...The Green Dot Killer (TV #16)...Dr. Drisco (TV #19)...just to name a few. Of course, a villain that will be of great interest to U.S. fans is The Red Skull (TV #13 and 18)...the only "baddie" Tim didn't finish off the first time around. Just who he was and what was his mission in life was never clearly established, except that in the first story he was intent on destroying the Allied Fleet. His appearance was similar to his U.S. counterpart, with a grinning skull perched on his uniformed shoulders. In a way, I was sorry to see him depart with Tim's final words of: "He's finished this time. No one could survive that blast. How long will it take men to realise 'They that live by the sword, perish by the sword'!" For the sake of interesting stories, let's hope that the guys in comics never learn!

Tim Valour became the Defender of the Peace with issue #9. At this time there was a change in uniformto one with a winged "V" for Valour emblazoned on the chest...and also a permanent sidekick by the name of Flight Sergeant Happy MacDhui, better known as "Hap". Despite the sound of his name and the Scottish beret he wore, I can never remember Hap speaking with an accent. Prior to Hap's introduction, the only reoccuring characters were Professor Boiling

who made his debut in the first issue of the comic and who was responsible for many of the "gadgets" used by Tim and his beautiful daughter Ann Darling who entered the third issue as Tim's "sweet heart"...but was his "fiancee" three issues later. Which just goes to show that you have to keep your eyes out for designing women, even in a comic book!

In issues #4-7, Dixon started to introduce more planes into his comics and from the eighth issue onwards, planes began to hog the cover more and more. In fact, only seven covers out of the first two dozen failed to carry some type of plane. Even though Dixon didn't realise it, he was preparing himself for AIR HAWK.

By issue #28, Tim had shed his "Defender of the Peace"tag and had become "Special Security Agent". After a few dozen issues under this label, Tim decided to go back into the services...where he proceeded to win fame as "Commander of the Tigerhawk Squadron". While many of you may be under a misapprehension that U.S. forces played a major part in the Korean conflict, you'd be amazed just how much help was given by Sabre Jets flown by Tim, Hap, and Tumbo (Tim's other wingman)!!

By the time Tim Valour had reached the end of his 150 issue run, Dixon's art had reached a very high standard. Unfortunately, economic pressures rarely allowed us to observe this standard. All the pages were a standardised 6 panels per page....the lettering left a great deal to be desired...and the general impression was one of great haste. As John was often turning out16 pages a week, plus writing his own stories, doing his own lettering and covers, I guess "great haste" is something of an understatement!

Although the technique used on the early Tim Valour stories couldn't compare with later issues I, for one, preferred much of the early material. The artwork of the first two or three dozen issues had a clearly defined, action packed appearance. You could "hear" the bullets whining and ricocheting..and the planes screaming into a dive...and you could "feel" the punches as they thudded home on the villains jaw. Like all of Dixon's early yarns, Tim's stories were of the good, old-fashioned slam-bang-crash-wallop variety and the reader was never insulted with a lot of suedo-scientific mumbo-jumbo.

I can't leave Tim Valour Comics without a word of praise for the early covers. They were as colourful as anything that was ever produced in the U.S., packed with action...and not a word balloon in sight!! While other titles may have produced the odd outstanding cover, for overall consistancy none fo them could match Tim Valour.

Now let's jump back to the time of Tim Valour #6. By now, the young Dixon's speed had improved so rapidly he was asked to do another title in conjunction with TV...and it was a case of...

ENTER, THE CRIMSON COMET!!

The Crimson Comet was the first of Dixon's heroes to have an alter ego...and the only one to extract any benefit from it. Another character, Phantom Commando, had an alter ego but was rarely seen without his mask. Crimson Comet was, in reality, Ralph Rivers, Private Investigator...and a "hunchback". Actually, this hunchback was only a false hump to cover CC's wings..for the Crimson Comet had real wings, much the same as Marvel's Angel. (It's a pity that Stan Lee didn't take a leaf out of Dixon's book and conceal the Angel's wings under the much more acceptable disguise of a hunchback...instead of strapping them flat!) Unlike Dixon's later costumed heroes, Crimson Comet had an origin story. I have no idea why Dixon chose to ignore the generally accepted idea of an origin story...but I do know that it never lessened the enjoyment of any of his characters.

Dixon disposed of CC's origin in four short panels. The wife of a famous medical surgeon, Sir Anthony Rivers, was killed by a burglar. Her death affected the mind of Sir Anthony and he decides to make himself and his three-year-old son famous. To do this, he grafted the wings of a Giant Eagle to his sons body, connecting the nervous systems and injecting a certain serum into them, which allowed the wings to grow in proportion to the boy's body. The reasoning behind Sir Anthony's scheme to make them "famous" was never made clear...in fact, after this brief mention in the opening story, he was never heard of again. At the age of 21, Ralph decides he'll disguise himself as a hunchback.detective, become The Crimson Comet and fight against the crime and evilthat has been the cause of his mother's death. With the origin disposed of CC takes to the sky...and makes certain that all those who travel the highway of crime pay the toll!

For eight exciting issues, I watched the development of Crimson Comet...then a bombshell! With the ninth issue, the strip was taken over by Albert De Vine....a man whose work never held much appeal for me. Strange to say, in those days Dixon thought that De Vine was a much more polished artist than himself. If this was correct...then I'm not much of a judge of comic art and have wasted all these years studying it! Fortunately for CC (and the readers), Dixon came back to the strip about the 45th issue...and continued to work on it until its ultimate demise somewhere around issue #80. As with Tim Valour, it was the later effort that showed the more polished technique...but it was the first eight issues I enjoyed most. One of the most enjoyable features of all Dixon's Crimson Comet stories was the manner in which he drew wings. They always looked like the real thing (again, a feature which Marvel would do well to adopt with The Angel).

Another of John's early creations was PRINCE AHMOUD_Mystery Man of the Desert who made his one and only appearance as the supporting character in ROBIN HOOD Comics. For reasons unknown, this comic only lasted one issue...which was a pity as Prince Ahmoud had all the earmarks of being an interesting character. His costume was almost a replica of that worn by Rudolph Valentino in the various "Shiek" films...with the addition of a black, velvet mask. On thinking back, he may well have been a "steal" from the Red Shadow, hero of Romberg's "Desert Song"?? But I was never concerned with his derivation...I only looked forward to reading more stories in which the Prince and his trusty friend, Ben Adom, would "fight the savage hordes which terrorised the vast wastelands of the Sahara Desert." I waited in vain for like the fabled Arabs, they must have folded their tents in the night...and disappeared into Limbo.

A "NEW" CATMAN

In the early 1950's, Frew Publications purchased the right's to Charles Quinlan's CATMAN. They ran a number of reprints of the U.S. comics...but these failed to gain popularity and the character was buried. In late 1958, it was decided that the time was right to revive this character...and it was Dixon who was selected to carry out the modernization program. Once again, there was no origin story...all the characters appearing as established personalities. However, any connection between Dixon's and Quinlan's Catman was purely coincidental...only the names were the same.

Where Quinlan's character was garbed in orange and red or orange and blue, depending on which issue you read, Dixon's Catman was a vibrant green and red. If the printer has done his job well the cover illustration should give you a better idea of how these colours suited the character than any words of mine. The "original" Catman's sometime offsider, Kitten, became Kit....a freckled-face boy dressed in an almost identical costume as his senior colleague. Dixon's Catman was given a gun, a utility belt and a visor that allowed him to see in the dark. This dynamic duo operated out of "Cat Rock"...an mountain stronghold shaped like a cat's head, containing comiker scientific equipment and their plane---the Catjet. You don't have to be astute to determine the similarity with Robin and Batman...but, despite the parallels, Catman and Kit more than held their own against their DC counterparts.

The stories were always well conceived and the artwork left little to be desired, if anything at all. My only complaint was with the lettering. Although it was far superior to the later Tim Valour lettering, Dixon was guilty of using a very lasy "C"....a

GO! THE MIGHTY CATMAN IS PINNED HELPLESS TO THE GROUND - NOW I WILL EVER THE SCORE!
MALETCHEK IS GOING TO SHOOT CATMAN - DO SOMETHING KIT...!
GO GET HIM BRUTUS!
DONT LOOK NOW! BUT THERE'S SOMEONE BEHIND YOU!
YOU DON'T EXPECT ME TO FALL FOR THAT OLD TRICK!

I'M FREE!
AS BRIAN ATTACHES A LINE TO THE BOX, A FAMILIAR SHAPE CATCHES HIS EYE.
STRANGE! DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING BEING THERE!
FOR PITE'S SAKE!!
SERIES 3 'THE BULLION HUNTERS'
NORTH OF THE MONTE BELLO GROUP
BUT DAD, WE CAN'T GIVE UP YET!
FISCH COULD HAVE MADE A MISTAKE ABOUT THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE 'BATANGAS'
IN THE CONFUSION OF ABANDONING SHIP AFTER THE TORPEDO HIT, HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD MUCH TIME TO TAKE ACCURATE BEARINGS!
HOLD IT! BRIAN'S SURFACING - AND HE'S HOLDING SOMETHING!
HELP ME GET THE BOX TO THE PLANE. WE'LL WORRY ABOUT CANTRELL LATER!
WHERE DID YOU GET THE GUN?
I KEEP IT IN THE DROVER - HAVE TO CARRY VALUABLES SOMETIMES
NOW IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES. SHOOT OFF THE LOCK AND SEE FOR YOURSELF!
STAND BACK!
DEAD! IT'S A LONG STORY, DOC. I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WAY BACK
A DAY LATER
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND, JIM. I'M MAKING A FULL CONFESSION TO THE POLICE!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, BRIAN?

Fault that became apperent in TV #2 and became more accentuated as Dixon's career progressed. Picking on one little letter may seem to be splitting straws in the way of criticism...but you'd be amazed at the number of "C"s" that could appear in a Dixon comic.

There can be little doubt that Dixon's CATMAN series ranks as some of the best comic book art ever to appear in Australia. All the more's the pity that there were only 12 issues. However, Frew Publications kept the series alive up to #22 by reprinting ten of the previous issues. In April, 1965,'Page Publications(Photo Type Press) started the ball rolling again when they started reprinting Batman. To date, there have been 4 issues which means one every 3 months. I doubt if any other comic series has been accorded the honour of being circulated three times inside such a short span of time.

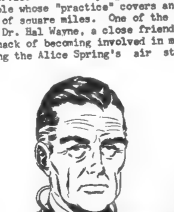
Earlier in 1958, Dixon had produced CAPTAIN STRATO for Youngs Merchandising. Dixon only had time to do three issues of this comic before he took over Catman...but they were up to the standard we had come to expect from Dixon. Captain Strato's costume looked to be a pressurized flying suit--not unlike that used by Batman--and again I'd refer you to the cover illustration rather than attempt a detailed description. From a giant Spacewheel that revolved in orbit about the globe, Strato would scan trouble spots through a powerful telescope. When danger threatened,Strato would board his rocket plane, the "Sky Phantom", and zoom into action. This comic contained the four Dixon trademarks....good artwork.... good storyline...no origin story...and its fair share of lazy C's. After the good Captain had put paid to Madam Tong in issue #3, I searched the skies for his return. After a couple of months, I decided he had run foul of one of those Russian Sputniks....or gone into orbit around the sun. When Catman made his debut later in the year, I forgot all about poor old Captain Strato...which just goes to show the ficklenss of comic fans! Still, Strato gave Dixon another opportunity to play around with planes, helicopters, rockets, missiles and other Air Force-type paraphernalia that was to stand his good stead on AIR HAWK.

Dixon's last venture in creating characters for the comic book medium came in 1959. At the time, he was doing cover artwork for Horwit Publications and, knowing his reputation for comic work, they asked him to come up with a new character. The result was the PHANTOM COMMANDO-Master Spy...Adventurer....Soldier of Fortune.... A Legend from the Second World War!! Although there is no origin story, we learn that Phantom Commando was really Bruce Maxwell who, with the assistance of "Tiny" Winkle, answered wartime calls for assistance from his base on "Ghost Island"...an unchartered island somewhere in the Indian Ocean. In general appearance, he reminded me of Fawcett's Commando Yank even though his uniform was not as ostentatious. Like Captain Strato, this character only had Dixon at the controls for three issues...but it didn't end there. After 14 years of handling assorted comic book heroes, Dixon had finally cracked through the newspaper barrier. Phantom Commando had proven so popular, Horwits was loath to let it slide into oblivion...and so it was offered to Maurice Bramley with Dixon's blessings. Maurice was a beautiful line artist...but he didn't have the feeling that is required for the comic medium. While he presented some outstanding panels in line art, the overall comic lacked the punch and assurance that was so obvious under Dixon's guidance.

AIR-HAWK

And so, after a long apprenticeship in general and many months of negotiating with various Australian newspapers, AIR HAWK And The Flying Doctors took to the air...and has been flying higher and higher ever since. The first version to be sold was the Sunday page and it made a simultaneous debut in Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth. Later it was to appear in all States except Victoria where, for reasons that only a Victorian would attempt to explain, they have no Sunday papers! Four years later in July 1963, the Daily strip made its debut in four States...and John Dixon's artistic ambition had been realized. Immediately after he became involved in comics, he thought of little else but doing a daily newspaper strip. The Sunday strip gave him partial satisfaction...but is was the daily that really counted.

The adventures of AIR HAWK centers around Jim Hawk, ex World War II fighter ace who establishes AIR HAWK CHARTER SERVICE in Alice Springs--a small township in the heart of Australia's outback. Apart from his general charter work,Jim provides an auxiliary service to the Flying Doctor Service--that remarkable body of people whose "practice" covers an area of thousands upon thousands of square miles. One of the FDS's more colourful characters is Dr. Hal Wayne, a close friend of Jim with the happy (or unhappy) knack of becoming involved in many of Jim Hawks aventures. Adjoining the Alice Spring's air strip is a medical



clinic of the Australian Inland Mission. This is run by nursing sister Janet Grant...who provides the romantic interest in Jim's not-so-dull life.

When it comes to detail...and fine detail, at that...Dixon is at his best. Never has this been seen to greater advantage than in the pages of AIR HAWK. Depiction aircrafts of any nature has always been his long suit...and this, no doubt, stemmed from his love of flying. For many years, he held a private pilot lisence but was forced to let it run out when the daily and Sunday strip demanded more and more of his time. Although they approach the subject from different angles, Dixon's keen eye for outback detail is only matched by Eric Jolliffe...a very fine Australian cartoonist. It is obvious that Dixon has made a careful study of everything that inhabits the outback area...the people...the animals... the birds...the trees and shrubs...the barren landscape...the caverns...the rivers and waterholes...the majestic cathedrallike ridges...all these things have come under the close scrutiny of John Dixon. His illustrations of Aborigines...their weapons.....their legends...show a remarkable appreciation of this earth's oldest inhabitants.

Like most artist, Dixon was impressed by the "big three"... Raymond-Foster-Caniff. However, only the Caniff of the 1938-48 era left any visible marks on his work.

Although his own work hasn't been influenced by them, Dixon has a high regard for the work of Stanley Pitt and Phil Belbin. He is impressed by Pitt's figure drawings and his capable presentation of hands, in particular.

If the drawings weren't enough to make you en AIR HAWK fan, the storyline soon would. On top of his obvious talents as an artist, John Dixon is an exceptionally fine strip writer. In fact, I'm sure that should he ever decide to forsake drawing, he wouldd have no trouble earning a living as a continuity writer for a number of U.S. newspaper strips. His stories contain plenty of action drama and suspense...and he ignores the obvious.

In short, Dixon is fortunate enough to be a complete production unit...capable of handling all facets of the comic book/strip medium. He is an extremely hard worker, hiding a quiet sense of humor behind a rather serious face. One gets the impression that his brain is constantly ticking-over...seeking new ideas. But with the contents of 28-30 panels to fill each week, I guess your brain has to be continually ticking over!

Dixon is a great booster of Australian talent and anyone in the medium seeking his assistance is rarely disappointed. No one is more delighted than he when an Australian artist scores some kind of success. His own efforts and success haven't gone unnoticed by his fellow artists. They are all pleased (and, I suspect, a little envious) that he has done so well. Perhaps Paul Wheelahan summed up their attitudes when he wrote: "I've always admired his industry and devotion--that's the word--to his work. He's a terrific worker and, let's face it, has done more with the medium, success-wise, than most of us."

Apart from appearing in every State in Australia, AIR HAWK appears in Ireland, England, South Africa, New Zealand, Norway, France, Holland, South America and, if latest reports are true, in Turkey!! Despite an article in VCC #6 to the contrary, AIR HAWK has NOT made it's debut in the U.S. The editors of VCC ran this [illegible] in all good faith...but they were victims of what is known as a "ham steer".

To date, only a couple of U.S. papers are supposed to have [illegible] AIR HAWK...but didn't buy it. One of the tales that filtered back was that they were more than happy with the artwork but [illegible] about the "localised" storyline...and if he would [illegible] it so that the U.S. reader could "identify" they [illegible] buy it!! I find this a little hard to believe. It [illegible] the U.S. reader isn't capable of digesting, enjoying [illegible] with something that isn't set wholely in the U.S.A. [illegible] so "American" about Tarzan, Prince Valiant, The [illegible] Blazer, B.C. or Andy Capp?? I can't imagine anyone [illegible] more American image than Andy Capp. On the other [illegible] perhaps editors be suggesting that U.S. readers aren't as adaptable as those readers in Ireland, France, Norway, Holland...and all the other countries in which AIR HAWK appears?? If so, it's time U.S. strip readers corrected them! The point about the above story that amazes me most is that they could even think that Dixon would change a highly successful formula, acceptable to most other countries, for the chance to have his strip appear in a couple of U.S. papers. I view the entire incident with a considerable amount of doubt...and I'm rather sceptical as to whether AIR HAWK was ever seen by any U.S. papers.

Even if AIR HAWK did have too much local flavour, there is no doubt in my mind that U.S. readers would appreciate and enjoy it. But such is not the case. AIR HAWK has a distinct universal flavour...and has been developed along that line. Where and when will you see AIR HAWK?? At this writing, I haven't the foggiest idea. Perhaps a few letters to your local papers will start the ball rolling...hmmm??

For the last two years, John has had the assistanceof Michael Tabrett. Prior to working with John, Mike had no previous experience in comics...and I, for one, was amazed at the progress he has made in that period. He has reached the stage where, under John's watchful eye, he is responsible for a large percentage of the Sunday strips. If he continues to acquire the special feeling required for the medium, I think we may hear a lot more about Mike Tabrett.

Another who has helped contribute to the success of the strip is Brian Foley, John's agent. Without Brian's assistance in placing the strip, AIR HAWK might still be struggling to get off the runway.

The most important member of John Dixon's team I've left till last...his wonderful wife, Eleanor. Not only is she a wife and mother (they have two children, Andrew and Jaydi) but she doubles up as a Girl Friday and Secretary. Like most artists, John's memory isn't the best when it comes to dates, issue numbers,etc. This article would have lacked a great deal of accuracy without her invaluable assistance. And so, my thanks to Mrs. Dixon.

No article of this nature would be complete without a mention of John's workshop. His studio is perched high on a hillside in the backyard of their home at Bungan Head Beach. It is a spacious modern, air-conditioned area...with a delightful view. Anyone visiting it couldn't help but be impressed and I, for one, was green with envy!

Before completing this, let me make one point quite clear. Many of my views on Dixon's early comics is purely hindsight. When I referred to them as being cartoony in appearance....or trite in storyline...such was not my reaction when I first saw them. Just as SILVER STAR was the most exciting newspaper comic I had experienced, so TIM BALCUR and CRIMSON COMET were to theAustralian comic book field. At the time of their publication,I considered them the best Australian comic books I had ever seen. Some twenty years later, flaws that escaped me in my youth become obvious...yet, I still prefer them to the majority of comics I've seen since.

My sincere thanks go to John Dixon, not only for the pleasure his work has given me over two decades but for making availabe many of the illustrations that accompany this article.....and for taking time out of a very busy schedule to do the cover illustrations.

My thinks are also due to my good friend Reg Pitt for doing a "rush" Letraset job on the cover...and to that friend of John Dixon's who, many years ago, convinced him that he "could draw better comics than most of the stuff on the market." To that friend, wherever he may be, I want to say: "Thanks!"

In photo below from left to right is John Dixon, John Ryan, and Mike Tabrett. This photo was taken on a day when a TV film was made featuring many of the Australian pros. ABC-TV was so happy with the result, they've agreed to shoot a lengthy one on Dixon, following the production of an AIRHAWK strip from start to finish.

EPISODE 5 SERIES 6 "KILLER ROO"

AIR HAWK and the FLYING DOCTORS
by JOHN DIXON

FOLLOWING THE TELL-TALE TRACKS THROUGH A NARROW OPENING IN THE ROCK-FACE, JIM AND JANET ARE SUDDENLY SURROUNDED BY NATIVES.

TAKE IT EASY JANET! IF THEY INTENDED TO HARM US, THEY WOULD HAVE DONE SO BY NOW!

COME!

HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE WITH THAT SUBHUMAN! I JUST REMEMBER SO MUCH ONE OF YOUR LUBBERS YOU CAN'T TELL!

THE NERVE OF HIM!

IF YOU WANT TO GET US BOTH KILLED, JUST CONTINUE ACTING LIKE A FEMALE!

IF YOU'RE SCARED OF THEM—I'M NOT!

NOT SCARED FOR MYSELF—I WANT US TO STAY IN ONE PIECE

DOC AND THE DINGO HUNTERS ARE IN HERE SOMEWHERE! WE'VE GOT TO FIND THEM! AND WE CAN'T DO THAT IF WE'RE DECORATING THE BUSINESS END OF A'DOORA!"

SINCE YOU PUT IT SO CHARMINGLY!

BIG FELLA KOONABULLA!

WHAT GOT INTO THEM—AND WHAT IN HEAVENS NAME IS A "KOONABULLA"?

KANGAROO!' AND 'BIG FELLA' IS AN UNDER-STATEMENT! LOOK

GREAT SAINTS! IT'S A GIANT—HE MUST STAND OVER TWELVE FEET!

KEEP VERY STILL!

HE'S HOPPING AWAY!—JIM, I THOUGHT THE 'GIANT ROO' WAS EXTINCT!

SO THE STORIES ARE TRUE!

FORGET THE ROO!—THIS MUST BE OUR DAY FOR SURPRISES!—DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

I SEE, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE!

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

AIR HAWK and the FLYING DOCTORS
by JOHN DIXON

THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF A TOWERING 'GIANT KANGAROO' CAUSES THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES-MEN TO ABANDON THEIR PRISON-ERS AND FLEE IN TERROR—BUT STILL ANOTHER SHOCK AWAITS JIM AND THE INCREDULOUS JANET

NOW I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING! FIRST DISAPPEARING MEN—THEN AN EXTINCT BUT VERY LIVE GIANT 'ROO—AND NOW THIS!

THE WRECK OF A WORLD WAR TWO GERMAN BOMBER!

SO THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO IT

YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT IT THEN?

WHEN I WAS WITH AIR INTELLIGENCE DURING THE WAR, WE INVESTIGATED REPORTS THAT A GERMAN BOMBER HAD CROSSED THE COAST NEAR DARWIN!

THAT WAS ABOUT A MONTH BEFORE GERMANY SURRENDERED! A PRETTY THOROUGH SEARCH WAS MADE

BUT NO TRACE OF IT WAS EVER FOUND! 'TIL NOW, THAT IS!

THEN YOU THINK THIS IS THE SAME BOMBER?

I HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT IT—IT'S THE SAME TYPE THAT WAS REPORTED

WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREW?

WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT ONE—THEY COULD HAVE SURVIVED! I DOUBT IT THOUGH!

JIM! LOOK THROUGH THERE, AIN'T THAT SOME SORT OF DWELLING?

IT IS! AND BY THE SMOKE FROM THE CHIMNEY, IT MUST BE INHABITED—BUT BY WHOM!?

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT!

HELLO IN THERE! ANYBODY HOME?

THE GILDED AGE OF COMICS

By: STEVE KELEZ

[AUTHOR'S NOTE: This concept of the "Golden Age" only concerns the comic book industry, for it is a known fact that many of the most popular characters of that time eminated from the newspaper strips. This is where the talent was, and asside from the various reprints which appeared in several comic anthologies and special editions, we are not concerned with them at this time.]

How many times have you heard how great the "golden Age of Comics" was; and that the product of those by-gone years was the pinnacle in the graphic story medium, far surpassing today's output? Most likely this statement has presented itself to you many times, whether as an article in some fanzine, or the ridiculously high priced comics of twenty years ago sold by dealers. The "Golden Age" echoes its superiority throughout fandom, overshadowing and industry two decades older. But does it?

Just what is so great about the "Golden Age of Comics?"

History naturally plays an important part in the building of this image of wonderment. Articles are built on the past since it is far more interesting and enlightening than discussing current material of which most fans are familliar. But within this history the images become blurred and so is born the mistique of the "Golden Age."

The main reason for this is that many artists treat this era through a favorite character, writer, artist, or just plain nostalgia. To further complicate the matter, this article may be based only on a few issues of the particular comic, and when fact runs out, nostalgic memory or assumption takes over. The essay then becomes subjective in nature and the prejudiced attitude of the author explodes these characters into a glossy image, on such that in comparison today's material seems pale.

Add to these blown up reputations, a list of the characters that prevailed during the time, and the names of the various magazines with their enormous page [illegible] could resist the urge to wave in his collection such fantilizing characters and titles like [illegible], Dell Four Color, etc., not to mention [illegible] mythological characters like [illegible], Spectre, Black Hood, etc. It is no [illegible] "Golden Age" has been created.

The first question to answer is just what years made up the "Golden Age?" It is widely concidered to include the years before 1950, or, the first cycle of the super hero. But in the 12 years between 1938 and 1950 many collectors have their own preferences.

Most fans agree that the years 1939-1942 were the height of this era. Since the industry was still young it attracted a large amount of select talent, as the big "boom" had not yet arrived. Another plus factor of these years was the page count of the various books; 68 pages being the norm, with World's Finest at 96 pages, and some of the Fawcett special editions going into the three digets.

During the years when World War II came along, comics took a big boost in quantity, but not quality. Also, many of the experienced pros were heeding the call to duty and so an increase in talent was needed to fill the void. During these years the hacks entered, followed by the young and inexperienced would-be writers and artists (though it can well be said that these people matured into the craftsmen of today). During the latter portion of the 1940s the super hero dwindled in popularity and was replaced by western, crime and horror titles, and is therefore, not too representative of the "Golden Age."

Evaluations of comics are naturally based on art, stories and the handling of characters. These are the criterion which will be used in comparing the "Golden Age to our contemporary material.

One point which the pre '50 comics had for them was that there was no Comics Code Authority to inhibit and hamper the presentation and content of the stories. This allowed for realism if the author could handle it; an ingredient often missing in today's material. But many authors and hacks used this realism for sensationalism, which is just as bad as having our present censorship code.

Story types took a varied look too. Common crime, and common but serious crooks, were as much a part of the scene at that time, as sinister scientists, alien blobs, and patriotic themes are today. Contemporary subjects predominantly utilize the latter three, with heavy intrest on blobs and assorted outer space heavies.

But even if the "Golden Age" had these themes, their presentation was a different story indeed. Dialog and captions, for the most part, were stilted for proper impact upon the reader. The plots were extremely underdeveloped, and many times took on very childish aspects. (Of course, comics are aimed at children, but there are limits to what even a child will tolerate.) For the most part, some villain was out to do some foul deed and in the ensuing pages our hero does battle and is victorious.

Characterization in these early books was just about nil too. and looking at the subordinate characters, we usually find that they comprised a humorous facet of the strip, or as we call it, "comedy relief."

One basic reason for this lack of decent plots and characterization was the low page count of most stories. In a comic magazine which averaged a good 68 pages you'd think that more than 6 to 10 pages would be alotted per story. Of course this didn't apply to the main hero or star of the book, as he usually had about 13 pages to work with. Most of the comics were actually anthology types, featuring a multitude of minor characters and even lesser ones thrown in to put out the book. Each title usually had one or two main characters which were cover featured and had the selling power. Surprisingly, even many one-character books were shuttered with filler material, such as Black Cat which actually contained only one story of the female crime fighter.

Compare these short, lackluster stories and inadequate characterization with the current 15 and 20 page strips, indepth characterization, and the "golden age" seems more like a stone age! Of course the preceeding is only in a broad sense, for some books did feature lengthy stories (eg, all Star and All Winers), and above average plots usually making use of the author's censorship freedom. But for the most part these were few and far between, and always centered around a particular character.

The basic ingredient in the graphic story medium is the art. This is one facet of the product which can make or brake the strip. This becomes apparent for many times when the story is great and the art poor, the script is brought down to a mediocre level. This is the main reason why most strips seem so bad; the overall art of this period was extremely bad, and it is a safe bet that 99% of the work turned out during the golden age would be unacceptable for present standards!

And surprisingly, it is to this art that we attribute the big 'plus' of the "golden age." How many times have you read plaudits to Simon and Kirby, Joe Kubert, Paul Gustavson, Reed Crandall, Mac Raboy, and others? Sure, several of these artists were very good, but compared to their present craftsmanship, most of the early material was childish in comparison. I'm sure they'd like to think they have improved in the last twenty

The Original PLAS with WOOZY

The Original HUMAN TORCH!

years. In cases like that of Simon and Kirby, Kubert, and a few other well known contemporary artists who got their starts in the "golden age," their work at that time is extremely poor. Simon and Kirby in particular. Their inking is slopy, features undefined; the whole aspect of hack work. It can well be said that many of the greats of today actually learned their trade while on the job; they were paid to practice! And which of these "golden age" greats everyone raves about can surpass Carmine Infantino, Al Williamson, Gene Colan, Steve Ditko, Gil Kane, Wally Wood, Dick Giordano, and Frank Frazetta to name a few? The latter easily outweighs the former by sheer weight of numbers alone.

An interesting note about the "golden age" was that the general style of art was of a cartoon nature. Most strips were populated by crude figure art to begin with, and also supported a good deal of cartoonish aspects. This took form more clearly in the subordinate characters, the hero and heroines being the only characters rendered realistically. The cartoonish facet has entirely disappeared in today's sophisticated industry, unless of course, the strip is a satire such as Plasticman or the Spirit. /Note: this article was written prior to the appearance of the cartoon-like "Fatman".--Editor./

Techniques haven't changed much since the inovations of Eisner, Simon and Kirby, and Bob Kane, to name a few. But where as the "golden age" had this select few, today their teachings are universally used.

One outstanding feature present in the art of the "golden age" and one which is lacking today, was the cover illustrations. On the whole, the covers were excellent, using a realistic and well detailed illustration. To further enhance this, the scenes depicted were often of the abstract nature, depicting either the true essense of the main hero (eg, the Sandman emerging from a gangster's dream), the hero rescuing a scantily clad heroine from the clutches of some demonically portrayed villain, or possibly a group shot of all the characters featured in the comic. In fact, the whole mystique of the "golden age" can easily be based on the covers alone because of their striking boldness, and their above average art. Just browsing through a set of Jerry Bails' cover photos can bring forth such wonderous assumptions, and they are almost entirely false. It would be wonderful to see our current ediors take note of this and begin to produce their own abstract covers.

Unlike the generalities attributed to the comparison of story and art, characters are a more subjective subject. Everyone has their favorites for some particular reason, whether it be the nature of the character

or the men behind the strips. Some of these characters were truly great, while too many others have become distorted because of biased articles. And the question now arises, that if there were so many popular characters then, why have so few been brought back?

When hearing such names as the Sandman, Spectre, Black Hood, Dr. Fate, Captain America, Guardian, Blue Beetle (sic), the early Batman, Superman, Plastic Man, the Spirit, Hawkman, the legendary and almost sacred JSA, All Winners Squad, Captain Marvel and a host of others, is it any wonder that one conceives greatness within this era? The main awe of these characters was their individual powers and types of stories that could

BATMAN in Classic Form

be built around them. But the trouble was that the majority of really interesting and intriguing attributes of these heroes were never really exploited to their fullest potential. How could they be with the lack of true craftsmanship in the industry at the time? This is easily apparent in the anthology type books most of the heroes appeared in; bad art, and a minimum of pages for creative plots. The point is that most of these greats are lauded over because the author has found one or two good points subjective to him, and all bad faults are ignored. So the reader now has a gosh wow (sic) picture of an otherwise mediocre character.

A good case are the early issues of Captain America now being reprinted by Marvel. Just look at the reprints of those early tales. Even if the reproduction has been mared, it is still apparent that this was not Simon and Kirby's best work, even though most articles will tell you so. And what of the much proclaimed battle between the Human Torch and Submariner reprinted in the Super Hero Annual? another "golden age" myth down the drain. (however I have heard the second meeting was better; though I don't see how it could get worse.) Possibly one of the most over-praised comics of that era was All Star. Now I haven't seen too many issues of this particular comic, but in all cases the art was representative of the period, mainly, cartoonish. And the stories, for all their length, were mediocre at best. Each chapter, being a short, underdeveloped plot within itself, left no room for building the over-all story. The format is still the same, the majority of characters and strips from that era were not what we have all too often been led to believe.

[illegible] though the majority of "golden age" strips [illegible] fandom tends to present them as, there [illegible] many strips that truly deserve the title of [illegible] would fit into the category of being [illegible] reading of today has ever utilized the [illegible] that the particular strip was the first [illegible] particular technique. Taking a hope[illegible] of these titles, they would in[illegible] which the individual characters and settings were fully developed, and not just run-of-the-mill. The other factor would include art and story, such that the important aspects of the strip would be just as meritable in today's sophistocated society.

In many of these classic titles, one fact is omnipresent; the strip is handled by one person or a close-knit group. In this sort of production the strip takes on an air of the creator or editorial policy, in that the subjects were handled with care; the author saying something, whether subtle or obvious.

Number One in this respect is Eisner's Spirit. His approach to all stories was something very personal, whether it be layout, the plot, or the characterizations; he was always experimenting with new technique in both art and stories. Another excellent example is Jack Cole's Plastic Man. Here was a grand farce on the comic hero, with over-exadurated villains, absurd plots (though often brilliantly executed), and a comical art style. This one-man concept can also be applied to various strips in anthology titles. Some times, these secondary strips were superior to the main feature, just because it was handled by one person who took unusual pride in his work; as long as he enjoyed himself and didn't have to resort to impartial assembly line production.

But even with these few exceptions, the comics of the present can still boast a superior quality. Stan Lee's Fantastic Four and Spiderman have the attributes of a one-idea strip such as the Spirit, etc. The close-knit stable of Julias Schwartz has made characters such as the Flash, Atom, Green Lantern, and Hawkman far better than their nostalgic counterparts. And the fantastic art of today's comics is a far cry from that of Captain Marvel.

And again, even if the "golden age" material seems more colorful, more mysterious than today's crop of characters, were they produced by such talented people as Gardner Fox, Stan Lee, Carmine Infantino, Al Williamson, or a host of others prelvously mentioned? So what was so great about the "golden age" of comics? Sure it has its few individuals, but as a whole, it can hardly compete with our contemporary industry. Comics have definitely improved over the last 20 years, and we fans have never had it so good.

And yet, it is not foolish to applaud this era, or its titles and characters. But fans have got to become a little more realistic in this respect, and not be snowed into overlooking bad points when trying to bring out the good. And maybe the "golden age" will not be a gilded age any longer.

THE END

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BLACK HOOD

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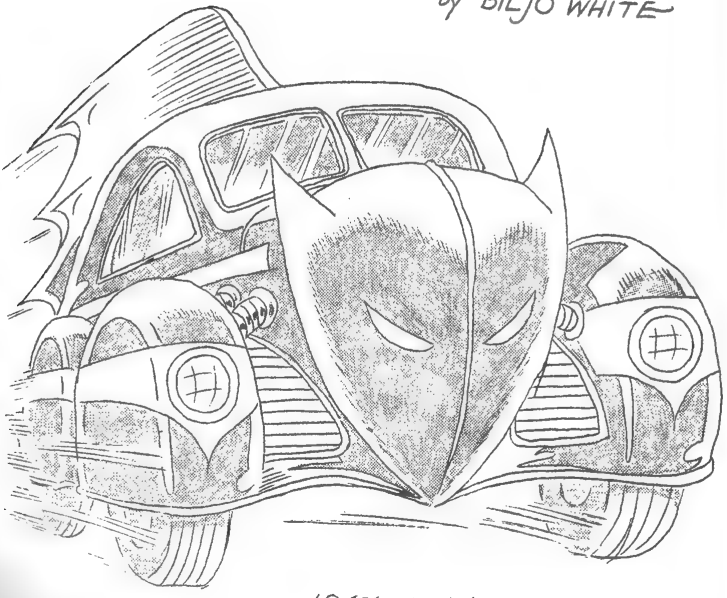
BAT-FACTS PICTORIAL #1

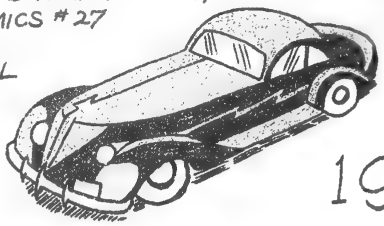
EVOLUTION of the BATMOBILE

by BILJO WHITE



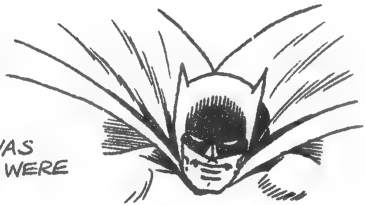
1943-1944
FROM the COVER of
BATMAN COMICS #20

BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THE BATMOBILE, BATMAN USED THIS SPECIAL 1939-MODEL HIGH-POWERED AUTO! THIS PARTICULAR AUTOMOBILE APPEARED IN DETECTIVE COMICS #30 (AUG. 1939)! IN THE FIRST BATMAN STORY, (DETECTIVE COMICS #27 MAY 1939) A SIMILAR MODEL WAS USED, BUT THE HOOD WAS NOT AS STREAMLINED!

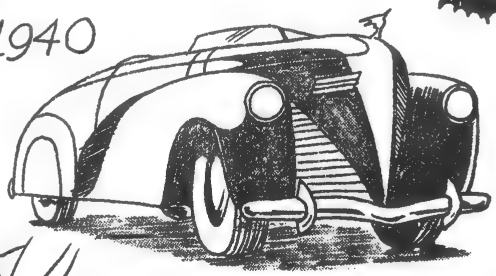


1939

JANUARY-1940 (DETECTIVE COMICS #35) SAW THE BATMAN CHANGE OVER TO AN OPEN-TOP ROADSTER! ALTHOUGH THIS MODEL WAS BLUE, SOME LATER MODELS WERE RED (DETECTIVE #48)!

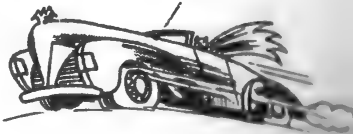


1940

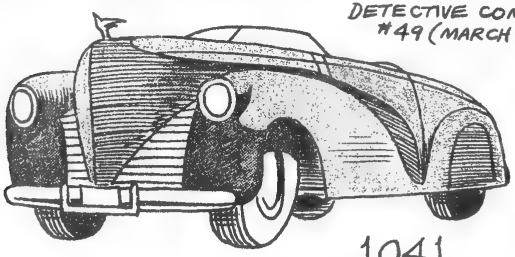


DETECTIVE COMICS #48 (FEB. 1941) OFFICIALLY CALLED the BATMOBILE!

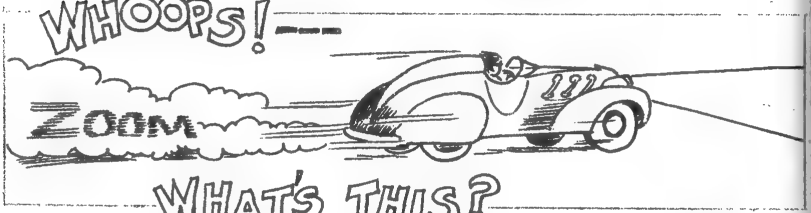
1941



(D)URING THE EARLY YEARS THERE WERE MINOR CHANGES IN THE BATMOBILE, SUCH AS DIFFERENT TYPE BUMBERS, HEADLIGHTS, ETC. THIS MODEL APPEARED IN DETECTIVE COMICS #49 (MARCH 1941)

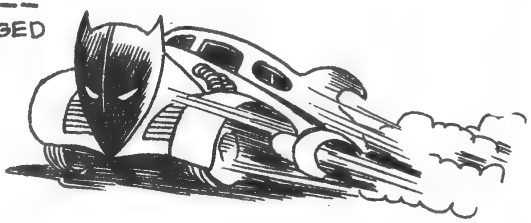


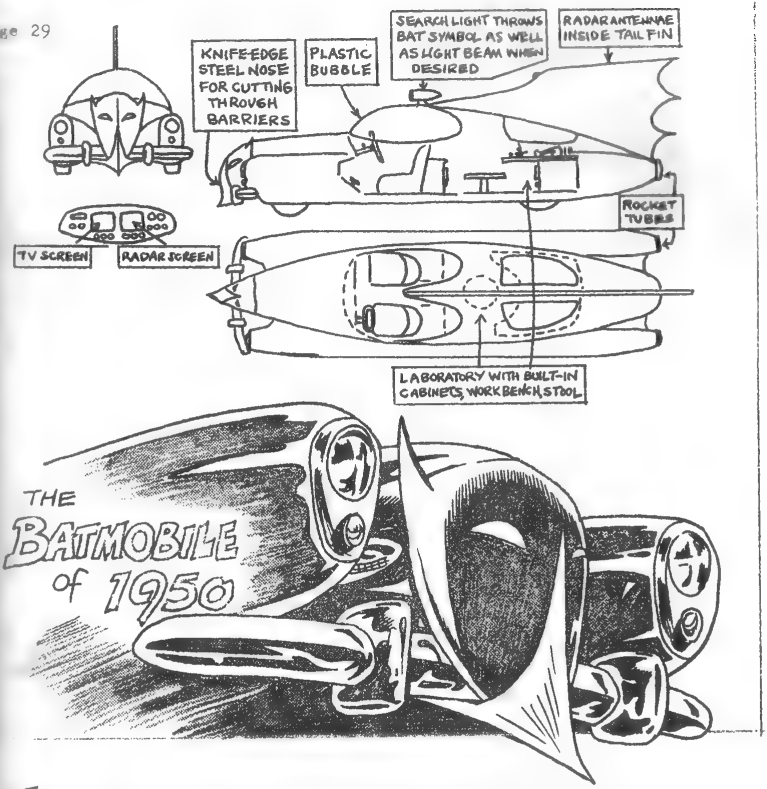
1941



YES! IT'S ROBIN—IN HIS POWERFUL LITTLE RACER... USED FOR THE 1ST TIME IN BATMAN #3 (FALL 1940)!

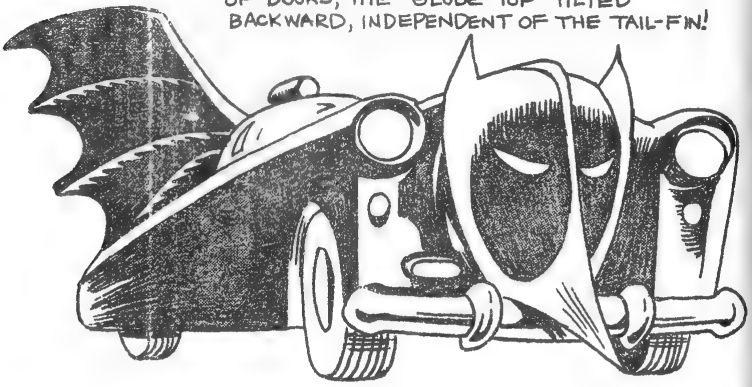
AND... HERE IT COMES!— the SUPER-CHARGED BATMOBILE THAT FINALLY LIVES UP TO ITS COLORFUL NAME (BATMAN #5 SPRING 1941)!



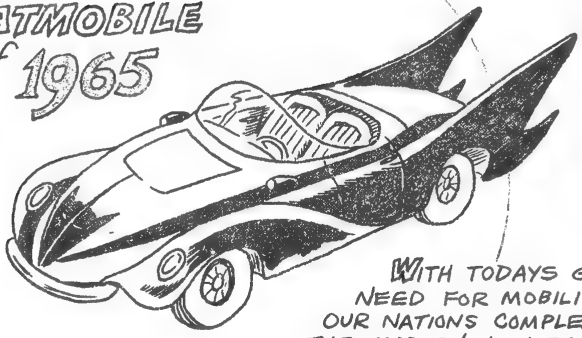

KNIFE-EDGE STEEL NOSE FOR CUTTING THROUGH BARRIERS
PLASTIC BUBBLE
SEARCH LIGHT THROWS BAT SYMBOL AS WELL AS LIGHT BEAM WHEN DESIRED
RADAR ANTENNAE INSIDE TAIL FIN
ROCKET TUBES
TV SCREEN
RADAR SCREEN
LABORATORY WITH BUILT-IN CABINETS, WORK BENCH, STOOL
THE BATMOBILE of 1950

THE TRULY CLASSIC BATMOBILE WAS THE ONE DEVELOPED IN 1950 (DETECTIVE COMICS #156 - FEB. 1950). WITH HARDLY A CHANGE IN THE BASIC DESIGN OF THE OLD STYLE BATMOBILE FOR MANY YEARS, THE ORIGINAL 1941-MODEL FLIPPED OFF OF A BRIDGE AND CRASHED DURING A HIGH-SPEED CHASE! WHILE LAID UP IN THE HOSPITAL BATMAN DESIGNED THE ABOVE MODEL WHICH HE AND ROBIN BUILT! IN THIS DYNAMIC STORY, BATMAN AND ROBIN WERE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TEST ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT LISTED ABOVE — PLUS A CHEMICAL BLACKOUT FOG!

THE MAJOR CHANGES DURING THE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES WAS THE SQUARING OF FRONTS OF THE FENDERS... AND INSTEAD OF DOORS, THE GLOBE-TOP TILTED BACKWARD, INDEPENDENT OF THE TAIL-FIN!



The BATMOBILE of 1965



WITH TODAYS GREAT NEED FOR MOBILITY IN OUR NATIONS COMPLEX TRAFFIC THE MODERN NEW BATMOBILE IS MADE TO ORDER! YET— AS IN THE PAST — THE FUTURE SURELY HOLDS MORE CHANGES FOR THIS UNIQUE VEHICLE.., ONLY TIME WILL TELL!

THE END

EC's WONDER WOMAN

Art and Article
by
Martin L. Greim

MOON GIRL

The Prince

If you are familiar with the world of comics at all, you are probably aware that EC was a comic line noted for its realism and terrific art. What you may not be aware of, however, is that this line did have one costumed hero book. Moon Girl and The Prince. That's right, Moon Girl was an EC character. Moon Girl, it has been said, was an outright copy of D.C.'s Wonder Woman and to a certain extent she was. However, I believe she was a better written and a more believable character than D.C.'s amazon ever was. Moon Girl's origin appeared in, of all things, a funny animal book. Animal Fables #7. The story was laid out in much the same way Wonder Woman's was. (A story Around spot illos.) The only difference being, her source of power and a slightly altered plot.

The story opened in the mountains of Samarkand. There, Princess Moon Girl, known for her superhuman strength, speed and endurance, was confronted by a suitor. Prince Mengu, a true son of Hercules, had come to ask for her hand in marriage. Moon Girl beseeched her mother, the Queen of Samarkand, not to let the marriage take place. The Queen Mother then told her daughter of an ancient contest, carried down from the days of Marco Polo. A tradition that must be satisfied, before a marriage cermony could take place.

She told of how, during the 13th century, the daughter of the very first Princess of the Moon, not wishing to marry a man weaker than herself, arranged a contest of strength with her suitors. However, the Princess of the Moon was as strong as she was beautiful and no man was her equal. One day, though, a man of princely bearing came and she feel in love with him, but her pride would not permit her to yield to a man less strong than herself. He was stronger than any man she ever met, yet, after a desperate struggle, she defeated him and the young man rode away - bitter with despair. The princess was left sad and lonely. Soon afterward her country was involved in a series of battles. Durring one of these battles, the princess slew an evil wizard and took from him a magic moonstone talisman that made her invincible to harm and multiplied her strength tremendously. The princess was still sad, 'till one day she spied her love, in the midst of battle. Dashing forward, she snatched him from his horse and returned with him to her people. The Princess of the Moon had found her true love.

After telling Moon Girl this tale, The Queen gave her the magic moonstone. All she had to do was touch it and tremendous powers would be hers. (It was later told, the stone glowed red when danger was nearby.) From that day on, Moon Girl always wore the moonstone at her throat.

The contest between Moon Girl and Prince Mengu was a mighty one, but in the end Moon Girl was the victor. And like her ancestor, she was saddened when the Prince rode away. Realizing she had made a mistake, Moon Girl decided to find him and win him back. She finally discovered him in America, where under the name of Lionel Manning, he was an athletic coach in a college. They were united at last; but both loving their adopted country, they decided to stay and dedicate themselves to fighting evil.

Moon Girl took the name Clare Lune and became a teacher at the same college as The Prince. Soon after, she looked in battle against Satana, one of her most evil foes. Satana dressed in a green outfit and a hooded cape with horns on it. She was an apt foe for the maid of the moon. With each encounter, it took all of Moon Girl's powers to defeat her.

Moon Girl, as a character, was better done than Wonder Woman. Though simmilar, she used the magic of her moonstone for powers; and rather than a Steve Trevor, always chasing after her, she had The Prince as an ally. It is too bad today, when even Wonder Woman is no longer super, that Moon Girl couldn't be revived. Comic magazines are sorely in need of a good super heroine, in its second heroic age.

RAZETTA
FOREVER

FRAZETTA FOREVER

Here we are at last! Here is the long-delayed, postponed, retarded (look it up) third installment of this meandering department.

Frazetta fandom is really on the upswing which kind of makes me glad that I attended Nycon III. This con was a new step for Fraz fandom, because for the first time the crowd of admirers actually got together with Frank, and became involved in several terrific bull-sessions. A number of occurrences happened that really got things moving.

Bob Barrett and I visited Frank at his home on Long Island. We gaped at his original paintings displayed around the house, talked for hours with Frank and his family, and even engaged in a lively game of softball. Both of us were extremely impressed by the genuine friendliness and personability possessed by Frazetta and his wife, Ellie, who made us feel relaxed and open after our initial uneasiness.

Frank was really amazed to find the terrific amount of interest in his work, and the homage shown by the various Frazetta oriented fandom artists, (the best of whom appear in these pages: Wrightson, Kaluta, Harper, and Hickman!). Bob and I were moved by his work, to say the least, and we fulfilled our immediate ambitions in "rubbing shoulders with the Great One." We are alive with him! We know him!

Vern and Frank, (Vern being Corriell and a Burroughs bigfan,)began seriously discussing possibilities for a magazine devoted entirely to Frank and his works. Ideas were tossed about concerning the format and publishing schedule, circulation, and other planning stage procedures. Also discussed was the Burroughs Bulletin containing a wealth of Frazetta material. This item is by now becoming a legend in its own time. Hope it's out soon.

The con also saw the advent of SPA FON'S sister mag- SOUA TRONT, which contains excellent articles dealing with EC, Williamson, and Frazetta, of course. It can be obtained by sending six-bits (that's seventy-five sheckels) to Jerry Weist, 1849 W. 127th St. E., Wichita Kansas,67207. Jerry, who attended the con, also, plans number two for publication shortly. Take a look.

The convention was also responsible for introducing Berni Wrightson to the majority of Frazetta fandom. As I see it, with Berni's style (vigorous) and imagination (boundless), which are present elsewhere in this issue, he should soon become known in the eyes of the pro ranks, as well as fandom in general. I met him at the Bibliophiles luncheon, where I openly admired his beautiful and complex work. Some solid friendships have developed from this meeting, and we all hope he makes it big. Berni's art has already been published in AMRA and Larry Tvie's 'zine, MONSTERS AND HEROES. A good start.

Among the other prominent fan artists attending the con were Mike Kaluta, whose "The Hole in Space" strip graces these pages. We'll see more of Mike's art in future issues. Two Steves, Hickman and Harper, also attended, and contributed to the general discussion and foolishness which followed the scheduled program. These two fellows have some singular opinions regarding the world of the artist, and it shows through in their excellent work. Frank, rather apathetic before the con toward fannish activities, realized the superior quality and sincerity of fandom's artists and is now helping several of them with instructive tips.

Several new Frazetta items have appeared since the last issue of SPA FON, among them numerous paperbacks, and a few posters. The p.b.'s include NIGHT WALK. by Bob Shaw for Banner, now defunct, THE AM-

SIRS AND THE IRON THORN by Algis Budrys for Gold Medal, two by Lin Carter in the sword and sorcery Thongor series for Paperback Library, T AGAINST THE GODS and T IN THE CITY OF MAGICIANS. Also, THE TRITONIAN RING by Sprague de Camp under Paperback Library auspices. Among others, the brand new SERPENT by Jane Gaskell, under the banner of Paperback Library. They are really working Frank, and he is turning out some incredible paintings. The new, fifth Conan book by Lancer is out, and is the best cover in the series yet.

Included in the movie posters are; THE BUSY BODY, YOURS, MINE, AND OURS, and THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS. All three display Frank's deft use of color and carica-

ture. Addenda on the paperback covers: WOLFSHEAD, a Lancer job from the pen of R.E. Howard. It's a collection of weirds, and the cover is truly breathtaking.

In the last issue of SPA FON, a list of Frazetta's comic art appeared. Forthwith, some additions: PERSONAL LOVE 24, 25, and 27; and TREASURE COMICS 7 and 8 (Standard Publications)

A bit of musing by your author is now in order, regarding the fascinating drawing power(no pun intended) of Frazetta's art. His creations, in all forms and themes, have always aroused a tremendous interest in me, and I guess I never really tried to understand why. Upon first being exposed to his art via the Ace Burroughs covers, I was immediately attracted because of the sheer magnetism and tremendous physical emotion which was stimulated upon viewing them. At that time I really didn't care why Frazetta appealed to me; I just wanted more. Fra[illegible] led me to discover comic fandom, and [illegible] never been quite the same; surrounding [illegible] with all the necessary elements involved in fandom.

Frazetta's art is untouched by any of the present day art forms, so we wonder where it fits in. The answer is; it doesn't. Frank's art is unique in the respect that it can be related to the older naturalistic art forms. Today's art, with its complexities and underlying currents of thought, is far harder to understand, much less appreciate. The appeal of today for art is mainly to the upper class, simply because it is capable of the insight which is necessary to understand and enjoy today's art forms.

The world of today, with its computers, high-rises, etc., has created an environment wherein it becomes almost necessary to fit in the groove or become alienated. Rejection of this environment can be seen everywhere, and a return to natural atmosphere can be seen in things like Art Nouveau, psychedelics, acid-rock music, and the underground, a movement which is growing considerably.

Fritz's art to me is a part of this dynamic growth, yet it is more, because my feelings are seldom more aroused than when I see a new Frazetta painting. To me his art possesses a natural, unreal quality, almost organic in its composition, with colors flowing in natural form. Frazetta's and other similar art is increasing every day, and I firmly believe that Frank Frazetta's art is but a part, yet the start of a new trend in art.

THE END

AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE UNTAMED JUNGLE, MONA SAW THE THIN VENEER OF HER LOVE EXPOSED TO FORCES SHE COULDN'T CONTROL! HER MIND KEPT TELLING HER THAT SHE WAS PLEDGED TO DON BUT HER HEART KEPT YEARNING FOR THE STRANGER WHO TAUGHT HER THE MEANING OF. . .
UNTAMED Love
FRANK FRAZETTA
When Don first suggested my brother and I accompany him on a hunting safari in Africa, I was cool to the idea, but now that we had reached the dark continent, I felt a mounting excitement engulf me...
I KNEW YOU'D LOVE IT ONCE WE ARRIVED HERE. YOU'RE IN FOR THE ADVENTURE OF YOUR LIFE, DARLING.
I ALWAYS CONSIDERED MYSELF A HOT HOUSE FLOWER, DON. BUT THIS -- IT SEEMS SO MYSTERIOUS AND EXCITING...
YOU'RE JUST A BEAUTIFUL THING AT HEART, MY DARLING. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU FOR MY VERY OWN.
IS THAT WHY YOU WANT TO MARRY ME, DON? BECAUSE I'M JUST ANOTHER ANIMAL YOU'VE CAPTURED?

One of FRAZETTA's finest contributions to comic art's history, and the work which he himself calls "his best for the comics" is the story UNTAMED LOVE in Personal Love 32 (1955). A rare and obscure item, it is the most sought Frazetta item today by those lucky enough to have seen it. Page one is reproduced here to show the matchless quality of the work.

Hickman
& Kaluta

Hickman '68

Wrightson

Wrightson

A HOWL HEARD THROUGH THE HEAVENS

TOM FAGAN

In bold letters the poster screamed: "WANTED BY THE NAZIS---SKY WOLF!"■ And continuing the death notice read: For These Murderous Attacks on The Feuhrer's Air Force...He Has Shot Down 82 Of Our Planes...He Has Maimed And Left Our Ace, Baron Von Tundra, But Half A Man...He Leads Dangerous Revolts Against Us In The Occupied Countries... "A reward of 75,000 Marks will be paid for him dead or alive. The same reward will be paid for plans of his Semi-Planes!!"

Well might the Germans wanted Sky Wolf dead. The above accounted for an impressive record already achieved by Sky Wolf in this his second appearence as one of the sky stars of the ever-popular comic of the days of World War II--AIR FIGHTERS COMICS. And Sky Wolf would continue to harrass the foes of Democracy until the War's end. Even after Air Fighters changed its logo■ to read AIRBOY COMICS, the hellion of the heavens would still be fighting mankind's evil, when other Air Fighters heroes had disappeared from the comic book pages of Hillman Periodical, Inc., publications.

It was Hillman that hit that hit the comic book readers of the day with a brand new type of hero. Champions of the sky who rocketed to fame and stirred imaginations to unforgettable heights. Which was natural enough, for real-life heroes of the times were the pilots and crews of Allied air-forces battling the hated Germans, Italians, and Japanese. Pilots were without a doubt the most glamorous of the fighting men of the period; comic books were again reflecting America's admiration for men to whom the sky was ever a battleground.

AIR FIGHTERS Vol. 1, No. 1, flashed onto the stands dated November, 1941. Immediate history wasn't in the making by any means. Cover featured was "The Black Commander." Inside, the cast of characters--beside Black Commander--were "Tex Tralnor-Test Pilot," "Crash Davis," "Pecos Pete," "Flying Cadet Jack Dale," "The Mosquito," "'Mach' Duff Junior Mechanic," and "The Black Sheep Squadron." Ill-fated were those eight. For they never appeared again! And AIR FIGHTERS COMICS, itself, for a whole year was missing from the stands. But something had clicked for....

AIR FIGHTERS COMICS Vol. 1, No. 2, blazed into being again dated November, 1942. And with its coming a whole new sage of comic book history was to be written. A collector's dream is this issue. "Nothing Like It!!!" proclaimed letters proudly above a scene of Airboy, riding the fabled winged plane, Birdie, to bring bulleted death to a Jap pilot from whose mouth blood whips in a frenzy.

Airboy was the lead star, no question about it! But there were other--heroes in their own right, who would leave their own indelible marks. Their names are history now. But none who read them will ever forget them. They were "Black Angel," the dark lady of the skies; "The Iron Ace," "Bald Eagle," and "The Flying Dutchman." And of course, Sky Wolf, the prowling one. "Look for these Daring Characters! They are New to You..." the reader was urged. Inside, character sketches to entice the reader even further.

"Sky Wolf! He's Sensational! With his Strange Planes and Comrades! He's an Anti-Nazi Prowler!" What reader could resist! Or wanted to?

Yes, as the book promised,■ the reward was indeed, "Thrills, Chills, And Strong Excitement!" And a good share of it was to be found in the Sky Wolf story. Sky Wolf in his skin-tight uniform of purple, black boots and his totem symbol headress--the head of a white wolf with bared fangs, worn in the fashion of American Indians on the warpath. With him, a fighting crew of which any leader could be proud. The mute Pole, known as "The Turtle,"--mute because his tongue had been cut out by the Nazis. "The Judge," a somber pilot, whose flying skill more than once saved the life of Sky Wolf. And the diminitive "Cocky Roche," whose small stature in no way diminished his usefulness to his team at.

Fighting men with fighting planes to match. Craft of Sky Wolf's own creation--The Semi-Planes. Speedy ships with a single wing and tail assembly connecting propellered fuselages. When a pilot riding in each fuselage and at any given moment in full flight, a semi-plane could separate to become two individual planes. Not only that but each fuselage boasted a dummy cockpit, while the pilot rode in a small nacelle loated behind the engine. Such subterfuge proved effective in aerial combat with the dummy cockpits drawing harmless fire from the enemy, while a sky Wolf team member in turn delivered rapid machine gun blasts of deadly accuracy. Not only that, but the half-plane construction allowed each pilot■ to draw close to Axis foes, and nearly touch them before firing on them at will. Two semi-planes thus actually provided four individual aircraft.

Sky Wolf's first chronicled foes were the villainous Baron Von Tundra and Goro "the yellow butcher of Tokeyo." The latter was dismissed in a single story but Von Tundra remained on to plague Sky Wolf in many encounters. A frightening figure was Von Tundra. He was called the "half-man," a name given after Sky Wolf had shot down this skilled Geran Ace. The resulting crash left Von Tundra with half his body so badly mangled that it had to be replaced with steel from head to toe. His hatred of Sky Wolf was so intense that Von Tundra leapt at the opportunity for vengeance■ when Hitler himself commanded the colonel Baron and Goro to kill the wolf-headed fighter.

It was devilish torture that Von Tundra and Goro contrived when Sky Wolf fell into their hands. Their hated enemy was bound and tied against a wall. Then a cage with two ravenous rats within was pushed up to chest level. A hot flame behind the back of the cage goaded the sharp-toothed rodents to escape the maddening heat. The only escape--chewing their way through Sky Wolf's living body! Yet Von Tundra was not to be the victor. Turtle, The Judge, and Cocky Roche had also been captured and faced death at the hands of a firing squad. But the Judge managed to slip away, RELEASE the rats from the cage and free Sky Wolf. In the confusion that followed, a frightened Hitler and his men are confronted by the fighting four. Goro is killed in the melee as the Sky Wolf crew makes good their escape.

A return match between Sky Wolf and Von Tundra took place in the very next issue of AIR FIGHTERS COMICS, Vol. 1, no. 3. The issue is dated December, 1942. It is a most important date for:

It served to introduce one of the most unforgettable characters of the First Heroic Age of Comics--a rotting mass of vegetation that had once been a man--The Heap! The chronicle of The Heap is a story in itself. But it is told now only as it overlapped the career of Sky Wolf. It began back in the early days of aerial-history--World War I. A German Ace, Baron Emmelmann, is sent crashing in fire into the morass of a vast swamp in Poland. Thrown clear, the corpse gradually merges with dreary swamp vegetation. But the will of Emmelman to live was so great, that a strange transformation took place, giving birth to a form neither plant nor man but possessed of an unholy life of its own.

The scene shifts. It is now World War II. The semi-planes engage in battle with a Luftwaffe Squadron, lead by Von Tundra. As the battle rages, both Sky Wolf and the German leader are forced to crash-dive into the very swamp that two decades before had claimed Emmelmann. Von Tundra is first to meet The Heap. His germanic words of horror arouse a chord of memory in the creature and he carries him to safety with Sky Wolf trailing behimd. In the interim following, Turtle, Judge, and Cooky are taken prisoners by the Germans.

Discovering The Heap feasts upon blood, the Germans decide to use him to kill the entire population of a Polish town in which a Gestapo chief has been killed. Frisco, a beautiful woman, the supposed friend of the Gestapo and really an ally of Sky Wolf's, is able to pass a prison cell key to the Judge under the very eyes of the Germans. Sky Wolf has witnessed Frisco's brave act. Reunited with his men and having repaired the semi-planes the foursome take to the skies once more. Below the

Polish townspeople are being lead toward The Heap while the Germans watch in fiendish amusement. Throttles wide open and guns blazing death, the semi-planes swoop down on the public square, scattering and killing Nazi soldiers. Breaking free and in turn killing more Germans, The Heap pursues Frisco. But the path of nature's monstrosity is stopped as Sky Wolf drops what appears to be a well-aimed bomb.

However, the bomb was not as well-placed as some readers believed. For in the June, 1943 edition of AIR FIGHTERS COMICS, Vol. 1, No. 9, The Heap was back. And this time he was the foe of Allies and Axis alike. The cord of the past is strong in The Heap. Coming upon a German air field, the man-plant learns it can still fly a plane. Then begins destruction of both German and British air bases. In the tale that follows, semi-planes and Nazi Messerschmitts converge in "a contest to see who gets The Heap!" To Sky Wolf goes the winner's honors with the plane carrying The Heap, spinning crazily in flames toward the earth.

Sky Wolf and his doughty crew would again meet The Heap. It was to be in Vol. 3, No. 4 of the May, 1946 book, which for some time now had gone by its new name, AIRBOY COMICS. And now America was to know the horror of The Heap. Paying $25,000, Prof. Herman Kringle has had the dead husk of Von Emmelman smuggled into the United States. With a strange serum the professor succeeds in bringing The Heap back to life and a carnage of destruction begins anew. Aboard a plane carrying The Heap and his evil mentor, Sky Wolf sets fire to the craft. Parachuting to safety, Sky Wolf watches the plane explode in mid-air high above the Atlantic. Later he and Cocky are unable to find any traces of the two presumed to have gone to the bottom with the remains of the plane.

The Heap was not dead. Indeed by 1947, Sky Wolf would no longer be in the pages of AIRBOY COMICS. Instead there would be new strips, backing up the Airboy series, and among them in a series of his own--The Heap!

What of half-man Von Tundra? He was given an ignominous role to play in AIR FIGHTERS COMICS, Vol. 1, No.8, May, 1943. He was put to work selling American war bonds and stamps. Sky Wolf came up with the idea after the Judge shot Von Tundra down over Britain. Sky Wolf's plan was "At bond rallies throughout the U.S., we can show the people a real Nazi big-shot, someone they've read about...and we can show Von Tundra how free people live!" Von Tundra, though, didn't want to be shown. In a "typical American town," one with "No storm troopers, no murderous Gestapo, No bayonets...just a people who know freedom..." Von Tundra made his escape in a P-38, paid for by the very people of the typical American town. Such an affront to patriotism could not go unpunished. It didn't. For the P-38, unknown to the German colonel, held a stow-a-way--a small American boy. Luckily the lad was the top seller of bonds and stamps in his town. And fortunately, he had some defense stamps with him too--ones that were "nice and sticky," ones he could use to paste over Von Tundra's remaining good eye. Blinded, the Nazi pilot is pushed from the plane to fall supposedly to his death. Using their semi-planes to make a "landing cradle," Sky Wolf and his friends bring in both the boy and the P-38 safely.

Like The Blackhawks in rival MILITARY (later MODERN) COMICS, the Sky Wolf and his crew continued an increasing war against infamous foes of many kinds. None other than Genghis Khan himself was brought back from the dead to fight the sky Wolf team in AIR FIGHTERS (vol. 1, No. 4) January 1943. Over the skies of "Tokio" the teams battled dragons and samurai warriors in Vol. 1, No.5 of AIR FIGHTERS, February 1943.

As if Germans and Japs weren't enough, the Sky Wolf team tangled with a pirate crew captained by the direct descendant of Captain Kidd, named Captain Sedlam. This took place in AIR FIGHTERS, August 1943, vol. 1, No. 11. By this issue, Sky Wolf, Judge, Turtle, and Cocky were wearing identical flying outfits of purple, with purple side-buttoned jackets, pink pants flaring at the hips, and black boots. Yellow scarfs added dash to their attire. Sky Wolf, though, retained his head covering insignia--the pelt of the white wolf. It was the dress of a fighting team of merit. Previously the group had dressed in uniforms of brown and in one story had even donned British Royal Air Force dressware. And in the beginning stories, only Sky Wolf had a distinctive costume, one mentioned previously. The Judge wore a business suit, while Turtle and Cocky were hardly comic book fashion plates with their blue slacks and red turtle-neck sweaters. But now the crew was dressed for action, which followed in story after story, until they met up with the ultimate foe of them all--the Devil, himself, who they gallantly drove from Manhattan to work his evil elsewhere. After battles with Hitler's henchmen, and would-be Japanese world rulers, let alone the encounter with Satan, the Sky Wolf's return to civilian life was hardly exciting. By 1947, the Sky Wolf series was no longer in AIRBOY COMICS. It had given way to The Heap and to new comers like "Johnny Halfbuck" and "Link Thorne--The Flying Fool." But it was grand while it lasted. And it's too bad it wasn't longer! The howl of the wolf of the heavens has been heard. It echoes now even faintly. Wherever men speak of heroes and deeds heroic!

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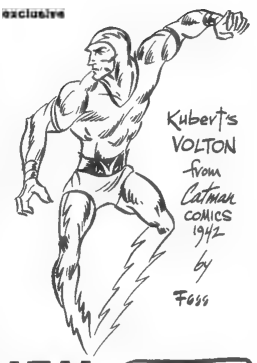
EDITOR REPORTS

"I was quite impressed by your zine (AE-5) - both in its quality and the amount of work /energy put into it. Incidentally, Ronn - only someone who has had work reproduced in a mag (or any other form of printed matter) can know the thrill of seeing his efforts in published form. It's a thrill you never lose, no matter how long you're in the business. It's still true with me, and I've been in 'it' going on 25 years."

- JOE KUBERT

INTERVIEW WITH JOE KUBERT

exclusive



RONN: What is the pay per page? How much more if you also write the script?

JOE: I can't tell page rates - specifically, but they vary from $25 to $60 per page for artwork only. Story will vary from $8 to $12 per page. The "lows" are pretty much set; the "highs" can vary - depending on the demand for the particular work (art, writing, lettering, coloring, what-have-you). When I started out, my rates were $6 per page.

RONN: Did someone other than you letter Hawkman?

JOE: The latest 'Hawkman' strips I did (circa 1963) were lettered by Gaspar Saladino. However, when I did the strip "way back when" - I did the lettering, and with a very shaky hand, might add!

RONN: How much are letterers paid?
JOE: Rates are $2 to $5 per page.

RONN: Do you know if all D.C. artists work 'twice-up' (double-size)?

JOE: As far as I know, yes. I think, generally, it's found that ½ reduction tightens, cleans, and clarifies original artwork. After a while, you find that you work 'for reproduction' - that is, the artist will know what the printed work will look like (which is most important) - rather than gauging full effect from the original drawing alone.

RONN: Who was your personal favorite of all the characters you ever drew?
JOE: Tor was and is my favorite.

RONN: Do you use a crow-quill pen?
JOE: I use a pen similar to it, but very flexible.

RONN: Do you dilute your india (waterproof) ink?
JOE: I 'water down' my ink with tap water.

RONN: Do artists ever get original art back? Would you like any of it returned?

JOE: Artists may get their work back, upon request - frankly, I've never had any desire for it. The point here being that once the publisher pays for work, it becomes his property. If the publisher feels he will have no further use for those originals, he disposes of them as he sees fit. At this time, the artist (writer, letterer, etc.) may request the originals.

RONN: According to Archer St. John (Tor #1), you started drawing in 1941; do you remember what character it was?

JOE: I did a strip called Volton, around 1941, when I was in my second year of high school or thereabouts. Prior to Volton, I worked for Mr. Harry A. Chessler; this was in the early 40's. I worked in his offices 1½ hrs. a day after school, and he gave me $5 a week for my expenses. This, I believe, was one of my greatest 'breaks' I ever had. He had a staff of men, among whom were Charley Sultan, Rube Moreira, Raphael Asterita, and George Tuska. I was allowed the run of the place - to look over the artists' shoulders and watch them work - and to ask their criticisms of my own work. These guys were just wonderful - their patience and their helping hands did much to engender a desire in a very young boy to be a successful cartoonist - just as they were!

EDITOR REPORTS continued

RONN: Doesn't D.C. allow the use of zip-a-tone? You used it so advantageously in Tor!

JOE: Yes, they allow it-or any - thing else the artist wants to use - so long as the effect is a good one.

RONN: What kind of paint is used to white-out a mistake?

JOE: Some white paint has a plastic base, so that ink will not dilute it. One is called 'Sno-Pac.'

RONN: How long does a brush last you; a pen tip, before it either spreads beyond usefullness or becomes caked up with ink?

JOE: A brush will last through 30-40 pages; pen, only 2-3.

RONN: Do you always use a blue pencil to rough-up (layout) a strip?

JOE: Yes - a special non-reproducing blue. Sometimes, just for a change of pace, I'll switch to pencil. But then it's back to the blue again.

RONN: The photo of you and Norm Maurer in Tor #1 has you doing the 3 Stooges while Norm appears to be working on Tor; can you explain this?

JOE: We co-edited each other's work.

RONN: The comic 'Meet Miss Pepper;' you inked it, penciled, or what?

JOE: I penciled Miss Pepper - a fellow named Bob Bean inked. Bob is now the guiding hand and power behind 'Wylde Studios' here in NY - they produce live and animated ads for TV.

A page from 'BLACK VALLEY,' TOR #3, taken from one of the many foreign editions which reprinted Tor stories.

RONN: Was Viking Prince (Brave & Bold) your own creation?

JOE: V.P. was created and written by Bob Kanigher, who also does Sgt. Rock - he used to write Captain Marvel. He is the best, in my opinion.

RONN: Why were you actually pulled off Hawk Man; or is it really true that Sgt. Rock, etc. keeps you too busy?

JOE: It's exactly as I stated before - my committments on other work made it impossible for me to do Hawkman; as much as I'd've liked to do it! Fact is, the last issues I did were getting close to what I felt I wanted in the character - when it became apparent I'd not be able to do it.

RONN: Would you like to continue on Hawkman?

JOE: From the preceding answer, what do you think?

RONN: What other artist/s influence you most?

JOE: Outside of an almost complete art education any aspiring artist can get from Hal Foster - I try to incorporate anything of value that I might see in any artist's work.

RONN: Did you and Maurer create 3-D before it was used in the movies?

JOE: I believe the 3-D movies were out before our comic books. Norm & I were publishing 4 or 5 comics through St. John Pub. Co. when we came up with the idea of employing a 3-D image in comics.

EDITOR REPORTS continued

RONN: Have you ever done any art other than comic strips? Your remarkable depth would lend itself well to fine art!

JOE: I've done a considerable amount of painting, including oils & water colors. Portraits & figure drawing in any media are subjects I find most fascinating. I've always thought I'd like to do some carving & modeling, but just never got to it.

RONN: Have you ever considered selling a strip to a newspaper syndicate?

JOE: I've made quite determined attempts at it, but I'm afraid to no avail! I have several weeks of 'dailies' in my closet gathering dust. And, as it happens, Tor is the character I've tried selling. Personally, I feel that Tor - as I've applied him in a syndicated strip - would be successful.

RONN: Is there any chance of your reinstatment on Hawkman now with the editorial change at National?

JOE: No.

RONN: Why did Viking Prince fold in Brave & Bold after finally winning the entire book to himself?

JOE: The sales didn't warrant continuation.

RONN: Did you see any / much actual combat action in the army?

JOE: I was in the army from 1950 to 52; the only action I saw was the G.I. rush to the chow line.

RONN: Do / did you really draw from models, i.e. the Tor dinosaures?

JOE: I've sketched from models, but not directly for my illos in comics. The sketches taught me my subject (the figure, dinos, whatever), then I tried to apply what I learn to the comics. For me, the amount of time needed to work from models would negate the idea - insofar as its use directly to comics as concerned.

RONN: What type of strip do you prefer; super hero, war, viking, Tor?

JOE: I enjoy all subjects - all types of strips - providing that they are well written. By 'well written,' I mean the writing should utilize the art, rather than use the art merely to enhance the writing. My preference toward Tor is simply because this is my own, personal idea and property.

In the Tor books (1,000,000 Years Ago), I created the character, wrote it, drew it, lettered it, colored it, and at one point, took the original art down to the engraver and set 'em up in front of the cameras, for shots to be set on the metal to be etched.

RONN: Which of the super-heroes did you enjoy doing most?

JOE: Hawkman, Dr.Fate, The Spirit (on which I did inking), and of course, Volton.

RONN: Some readers feel that your art is too dark; what do you think of this?

JOE: I try to draw what seems right to me. Basically, we in comics are working in black & white. I try to use my blacks to gain the 'effects' I want. I'm sure I don't succeed all the time, but I do try!

RONN: Do you have any personal dis-likes associated with comic books.

JOE: The only dislike I have of comics is the type of paper, reproduction, and printing used. This is, of course, due to the cost of producing an article that sells for 12¢. But, within these limitations, I'm gratified at the end results.

RONN: How far ahead do you work on a strip?

JOE: In comic books, we usually work 2 to 3 months in advance.

RONN: Do you usually adhere strictly to a script?

JOE: No. Bob Kanigher, the editor / writer of most of my work, will allow me "carte blanche" with his script - just so long as it looks good when he gets it!

RONN: Did you originate the panel-within-a-panel method, now used in many DC war comics?

JOE: I may have added slight variations, but fellows like Will Eisner, Simon & Kirby, Lou Fine, Irv Novick, Mort Meskin, to name a few of the real greats, preceded me and others along the lines of 'novel' breakdowns.

RONN: What advice would you give pro artist hopefuls other than "Practice, practice, practice!" as stated in the 1st (and only) lesson of your Comic Book Illustrators Instruction Course, '54?

JOE: I would say that one of the most important things for fellows in our business to learn is anatomy - this is something you cannot learn from comic books, 'Bridgman's Books on Anatomy,' or 'How to Draw,' etc. You've got to study from the live figure. Once you have learned the basics, then exaggeration will not look incorrect, but rather an extension of correct drawing.

Watch composition variation - when you jump around from one panel to the next too much, you disrupt the flow of the story - which is all important!

You may have the most beautiful drawings in the world, but if they don't tell the story, they're worthless, as far as a comic strip is concerned.

I hope my answers will enlighten some of your readers.

Regards--
Joe Kubert.

END

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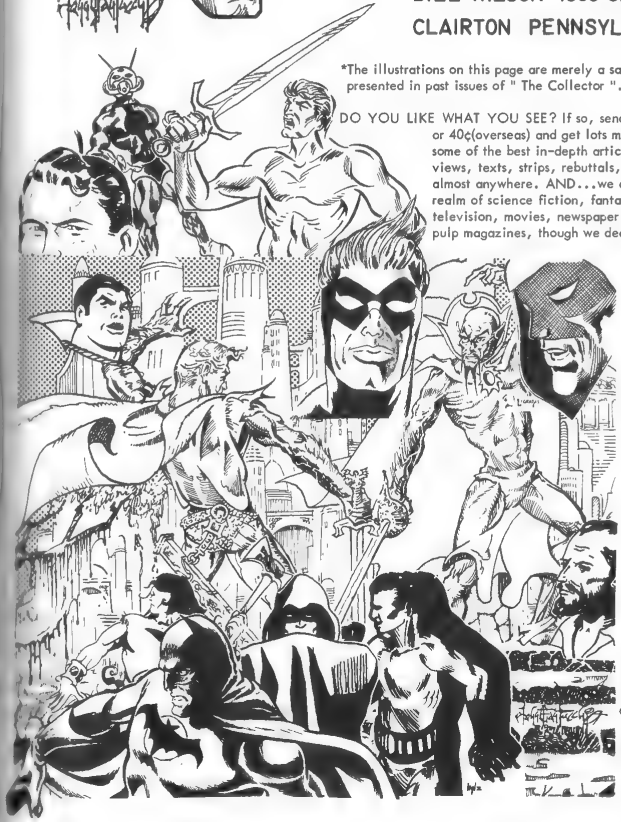

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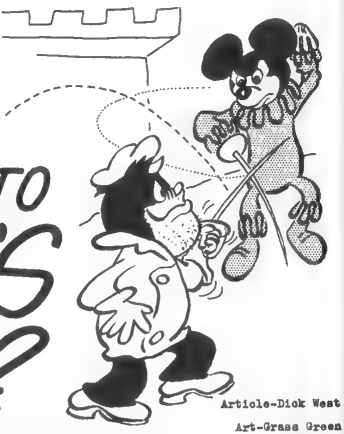
WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DISNEY'S COMICS?



Article-Dick West

Art-Grass Green

In the new era of comicdom we are currently enjoying,the spotlight is directed on the costumed super-hero, a natural consequence of the wonder-being's dominance of the present comic scene.Little attention is paid to any other variety of comics material.This is also quite natural, since the bewildering number of comic fanzines now being published were founded explicitly to treat of the mighty muscular marvels.But I believe that a serious interest in the comic book should embrace the entire field. (Mine is an amused interest,but I still think so.)

Probably the most ignored sector of the comic world is the so-called "funny animal" strip. The puerility of the expression might explain why an intelligent mind would tend to quietly eschew any relation with this type of comic, although in most cases the term is as inaccurate as it is asinine. At that,I know of quite a few teen-age nuts (like myself) who enjoy a few of these, and one famed (Don Thompson) has even intituled the letter section of his very excellent zine (COMIC ART) "Oh, So?", after a pet expression of Donald Duck and his kin. As a matter of fact, however,I cannot claim any overwhelming overall interest in this phase of comicdom myself. I gave up reading Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker and Tom and Jerry years ago, and I never could work up much enthusiasm for Peter Porkchops or the Dodo and the Frog. But the fabulous Walt Disney creations... Ahhh, there we have something enjoyable...

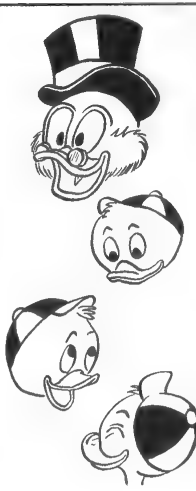
Or,at least, we used to.The Disney comics (as I call them for convenience,though dear old Walter Elias D. really has little to do with them) have fallen considerably from what they were in the past. Once they were a source of light amusement and pleasurable relaxation.Nowadays, with few exceptions,they're full of foolish tripe.

This applies principally to the secondary characters, like L'il Bad Wolf, Br'er Rabbit, Chip 'n' Dale, Scamp,etc. But I'm not interested in them.They were never much worth cheering about any-way,and have simply dropped from passable to putrid. Apparently, the small fry, for whom they are designed,enjoy them,and they can have 'em.What does concern me is the treatment of the good characters. Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge,whose adventures have usually been on a grander scale--and of higher quality. Unfortunately, they are not quite what they used to be, either.

Take Mickey Mouse.On occasion,he will play the clown,but most often he is a quiet, intelligent little fellow, sharp as a tack though not big and strong,always ready with some dryly sarcastic comment on his situation, generally cast either as a private investigator or as a special deputy of the local constabulary. He is the archetype of the underdog, matched against brawny bad guys like Black Pete to gain reader sympathy. Such he was and is, only he is no longer handled so well as in the Good Old Days.

Look at Mick's bout with the Phantom Blot, assuredly one of the classics of comicdom. It first appeared in Dell Color #16 way back in 1939,but it was considered good enough to be reprinted twice: once in a serialized format in DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES in 1949,and again in a giant comic during the fifties. It's really an excellent story,about an elusive thief who stole only cameras (which he promptly smashed), and about Mickey's efforts to catch him, employing a number of disguises which culminated in Mick's becoming a second "Blot" and doing some camera-smashing himself. Or take "Monarch of Medioka", a serial with a PRISONER OF ZENDA flavor,wherein MM switches places with a royal double. Or there's MM & PLUTO BATTLE THE GIANT ANTS (Dell #279), featuring a tribe of intelligent ants (natch) living in the Brazilian jungle. Then there's the serial about Mick's fight to repel a robot army poised to invade the U.S. (It is interesting to note that Dr. Fate, in a much poorer story, once licked an almost identical menace). Or there's "The Icy Hand" (MM #28), or "The Thunderbolt Machine" (MM #34) , and many other fine stories.What are we given in their place today? "Monstrous air serpents" that turn out, of course, to be blimps and such junk.And,equally of course, plugs for the Mickey Mouse Club TV show.

Then,too,Gold Key might do well to bring back some of the old characters.Sylvester Shyster was as slick a villain as Mickey ever encountered. He masterminded



the timber thieves in " Mystery of Hidden River", and invented a thunderbolt-throwing device that gave Mick some uneasy moments, but he never reappeared after that last episode. A more heroic type was one Shamrock Bones, one of the best burlesques of the immortal Baker Street wizard ever to appear. Bones,with his deductions and his disguises, his pea jacket and his trick pipes, was a comical character, but still a noble chap. He helped break up the smuggling ring in "The Mysterious Pill Plot", figured prominently in the case of the arch-villain known as the Icy Hand, and in "The Mysterious Crystal Ball" he nabbed the crooks as they were making a getaway with Mickey as a hostage. In fact, it was always Mick who was Shamrock's assistant,never the other way around. But Bones isn't around anymore.

Another mainstay of Disneydom is Donald Duck, the little guy with the quick,stormy temper, who has travelled all over the globe in quest of high adventure, usually ending up with more than he has bargained for.He has an even finer record of quality stories than has Mickey Mouse--and that record is due to Mr. Carl Barks.

Anyone interested in the comic book as an art form (as,incidentally, I am) must be attracted to the work of Mr. Barks.He is primarily a cartoonist, but as a rule he also writes the stories he illustrates, and he is a master in both fields.His narration and his drawings always complement one another to perfection. He can and often does spin a yarn that is strictly for laughs but commonly he provides an excellent adventure with a comical slant. Many of his stories are satirical in nature, and wonderful examples of satire,too. It's a pity they're wasted on a predominantly juvenile audience that is incapable of fully appreciating them. But then, most Barks tales would appeal to any adult.

Some of Barks' best work is represented by his stories of Donald Duck as an adventurer. Dell published some two dozen DD issues in the 40's and early 50's (before Don started appearing on a regular schedule), most of which were done by Barks. In those days, he had 52-plus pages to work in and could devote considerable time to the job, so he proceeded to weave both thrills and fun into gripping stories in his own inimitable fashion.

"The Old Castle's Secret" (Dell #189), for example,is a chilling tale of a fabulous lost treasure,with a masterful blending of all the right ingredients: a fusty old Scottish castle,complete with hidden doors and secret passageways, and an invisible "ghost" who haunts the gloomy corridors and is seen only when the shadow of his skeleton is cast on the wall. The illustrations capture the proper spooky atmosphere. The story is superior to most of the buried treasure variety, and still manages to be different and deliciously funny.

As another example,take "Dangerous Disguise" (Dell #304), a superb spy-chase drama that opens on the Riviera and ends in " The bull ring at Chilliburgeria,where the art of getting killed has been ballyhooed into a rip roaring show!" In this one, Donald and his nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie, become involved with spies who have stolen the plans for America's newest secret weapon, the Q-bomb. They pursue Madame Triple-X,an agent of Dictator Bruto of Ironhelia, over half of Europe,trying to recover the precious documents.As things work out,the U.S. government had the situation well in hand all along,and the Q-bomb was only "a firecracker for smoking termites out of wooden Indians." But there were a lot of fun and games before that was revealed. For effect,Barks drew the people in this story like real people: not caricatures but honest to goodness specimens of Homo sapiens. Madame Triple-X was a real fetching beauty straight from the Mata Hari fan club. Barks is forever amusing himself with thinks of this sort, yet somehow he contrived not to make the ducks seem incongruous in such a setting.

It is the tragic loss of DONALD DUCK magazine that Carl Barks no longer illustrates it. Nowadays, Don's adventures are, at best , pale shadows of the Barks epics.

Barks' best stuff, at present,is found in the pages of UNCLE SCROOGE. This lovable old miser, a greedy skinflint with a heart of gold, is Barks' own creation, and one of his finest. Scrooge McDuck is a traveling man,too, lured by wealth to exotic locales around the world. He has dived down to sunken Atlantis (hasn't about every comics hero?) to find a rare coin which he had dunked in the ocean; he has visited the ruins of Colchis and found both the Golden Fleece and the Sleepless Dragon; he has tracked down the Philosopher's Stone, finally locating it in the Cretan Labyrinth; he has climbed the Himalayas to recover the crown of Genghis Khan, swiped from one of his caravans by an Abominable Snowman; and he has found King Soloman's mines and the gold of the Incas, and journeyed to the center of the earth and out into space, and gone to plenty of other fascinating places for fascinating (and fiscal) reasons. Scrooge hasn't discovered as many lost lands and vanished peoples as Tarzan, but he's sure given it

the old college try. One of the most engrossing was the Pewwee-gah tribe (US #18),pygmy Indians dwelling in the lake country up around Canada way, and talking in unrhymed trochaic tetrameter like the characters in Longfellow's SONG OF HIAWATHA. UNCLE SCROOGE is one Disney comic that has not deteriorated over the years.The folks at Gold Kay made a wise move when they promoted it from a quarterly to a bi-monthly schedule.

But it's stupid to divorce Carl Barks' stories from his artwork: they are so artistically arranged that, while independently good,they are at their best when taken together. To get the full flavor of Barks, you must drink in the pictures as well as read the tales.He will expend a great deal on his drawing to achieve a desired effect. Surprise,fury, fear, worry, dejection,avarice--almost any emotion,can be summed up in a nutshell and expressed perfectly in the features of some Barks'character.You haven't seen anything if you've never seen Magica de Spell throwing a tantrum, and you just haven't lived if you've never read "Forbidden Valley" (DD #54) and witnessed that single, wonderful panel where the maddened dinosaur herd stampedes furiously out of the pass leading to their jungle hideaway. The effect produced is the very epitome of hilarity. A story by Carl Barks is almost certainly worthwhile.

In all honesty, though,his drawings are not as beautiful today as his ones of ten years ago, and, while he can still tell a story with wit, imagination and originality, he has lost a touch of the old polish and a bit of the old zest. After about twenty years in the grind, the wonder is he's still so great.

There is one other Disney comic that I must mention, and that is WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES (which I affectionately but ruthlessly shorten to WDCAS). With the present decadence of MM and DD,this is the only other Donald Duck book (besides SCROOGE) worth reading. It has the benefit of a Donald Duck story by Barks, which is usually good. The Micky Mouse serial, which the powers that be foolishly dropped for a period of several months,has recently been reinstated.It's generally pretty good reading.I'm happy they number the episodes now, but that's the only improvement over the years of yore. The rest of the stories concern subsidiary characters are are scarcely worth notice.Gold Key splits the cover among a number of characters now, which is helpful when you want to know the contents at a glance;but I can't help but miss the old style, with a single scene designed to be funny.Lately,too,they've taken to reprinting Br'er Rabbit and Scamp newspaper strips in WDCAS (which is hardly a novel idea). They're of only mediocre quality. Another innovation is a joke page (you may recall DC did this once, before the appearance of letter departments). Kiddies may now mail their favorite jokes "to Goofy". I hope he's more interested in them than I am. There was also (in issue #276) introduced Zorro, which is a blunder of the first magnitude. Anyone who has read any of Johnston McCulley's exciting novels, or any of the fine Dell issues scattered through the 50's, must find the later Disney version unworthy at best.And putting the gallant California bandido on a plane with the Three Little Pigs is adding insult to injury.

Oh,well,at least now the mag can offer variety, which is something. If only there were a variety of quality.

When I look back on the glorious adventure comedies of a few years ago, I can't see how the younger set today can possibly enjoy the tripe they're pumped with. Perhaps it's my own fault. Perhaps my more mature outlook now cannot appreciate what my child's mind of a decade ago could. I've no doubt that at least partially explains my attidude. But I can remember a lot of crummy stuff from the olden times, similar to today's, which didn't impress me much then. And I can still enjoy Donald Duck chasing Madame Triple-X across France,or Mickey Mouse wriggling out of the of the Blot's ingenious traps. Maybe, with a little luck, we'll have such stories again one day. Maybe...

Oh,so?

HALL OF INFAMY pin-up no.1

redrawn by dick memerich

BLUE BOLT & Gang

by Glen Johnson

In the GOLDEN AGE, as the 1940's are often called, comics were king. There were all types and sizes of publishing houses and, without exception, something good could be said for almost everyone. One might have had a top notch lead artist doing one story per issue, another might have had an extra good author, another an editor, or another might have a good cover artist. The NOVELTY line started off like a forest fire with excellent writting and art but like all forest fires they must burn out sooner or later.

Ever since entering fandom, I've been looking forward to a lenghthy article on the Novelty line. I have waited as long as possible and now I find myself writing it. For fans who haven't seen early issues of this group, I'd like to set the record straight. The early issues were equal, if not superior, to their competitors in many ways. The Novelty Press Inc. was a division of The Saturday Evening Post and distributed by Curtis. For such a small comic group, it had a very large distributing agency handling it and was fortunate to have been widely read. Also, in the dawn years of their existence, the Novelty line was graced with a great deal of talent in the form of such artists as Bill Everett of Sub-Mariner fame, Jack Cole whose work on Plastic Man is still considered a classic, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby who need no mention of their past efforts, Bob Wood who left Novelty to become co-editor of Lev Gleason's COMIC HOUSE INC., Paul Gustavason who illustrated the Angel for Timely, the Human Bomb, and others for Quality. Bob Davis, Basil Wolverton--an artist who had work appearing in Timely, Comic House and Mad Magazine, Al Plastino--one of the Superman staff artists, Larry Antonette who worked on the Blue Beetle, and Carl Burgos whose best work was the Human Torch for Timely, and Sid Greene who is the inker of Green Lantern. There were other artists, but the names above are the best known.

Much has already been written concerning Victor Fox and his promotion stunts to promote the FOX line of titles. Whoever was editor at Novelty (I assume it was Robert D. Wheeler because he is listed so in the mid-1940's with Mel Cummin as art director, Jane Spaulding Nye as associated editor, and Peggy Ann Crowley as editorial assistant) must have had a little of the same blood as did Victor Fox. But unlike Fox, the Novelty line was more on the "up and up" or so it seemed when it came to offering prizes to the readers. By clipping out the coupons of each issue of TARGET and later BLUE BOLT COMICS, these could be redeemed for a flashlight, jack-knife, kite, ring, gun, etc. I have no idea how reliable the company was or if the prizes were made of paper. Shortly after the coupons came out, the editor decided that the coupons would be done away with and instead the readers would be made "associate editors". What this consisted of was readers sending in letters criticising the Novelty line of comics. For those who had been saving coupons, upon request a booklet would be sent and cash could be sent in for the missing number of coupons. Novelty line was the first company to really initiate the letter column in comics. The letter columns appeared in both Target and Blue Bolt as early as November, 1940. The associate editors won one dollar for every letter printed telling why he liked or disliked the line of comics. It was quite common for prizes to be offered for different contests offering ten dollars for first prize and twenty-five dollars for telling why you liked their comics. Early issues rewarded the inside cover to free coupons, the inside back cover to telling how the readers could win cash for sending the best letter to the editor or announcing the winners, and the back cover listed supposedly "bargins" offered to the readers such as a baseball glove, Joe Di Maggio sweat shirt, etc. with prices from 30¢ for a fountain pen to $1.23 for a secret money belt. Although somehow affilisted with the Novelty press, the address for ordering these gifts was different from the editorial office.

Target Comics #1 appeared in February of 1940, soon after the first issue of Superman and Batman. This, as a good many readers know, was a common practice. On the whole, most large publishing houses did appear shortly after the introduction of Superman. A cash prize was offered for the best suggested name for a future companion title. The title mentioned was, of course, BLUE BOLT COMICS. Since it was named after Blue Bolt, the leading character, I suspect the winner had little to do with naming the title tho in all probability he did receive the award for coming up with the best name. About two years after the introduction of their first title, Novelty brought forth a third comic and the editor took up the inside cover with "YE EDITORS PAGE"..The following is a quote: "BLUE BOLT and TARGET have now become two of the outstanding comics published today. They could not have attained the tremendous popularity they now enjoy if it had not been for your great assistance through your letters to the editor." The editor goes on to say each letter is read and carefully studied and that more room couldn't be given to strips like Dick Cole and the Cadets as fans have asked so the four outstanding stories in BLUE BOLT and TARGET will appear in a new title, 4 MOST. The editor goes on to say that super-fantastic type characters are lossing in popularity and "clean living, straight shooting American types such as Dick Cole, Kit Carter, the Target and Targeteers, or Eddie Bell and his pals will never lose their popularity." He closes with the announcement that each letter printed in any of its titles will earn its sender one dollar. Tho 4 MOST might have been the newest title, it didn't live up to Novelty's earlier titles. The main reason was that each character was appearing in either BLUE BOLT or TARGET and another reason was that all its talent had left to work for other companies by this time. In the late 1940's, Novelty introduced its last new title, YOUNG KING COLE. Super Reprints has reprinted one but hopefully no future reprints will appear.

Novelty's letter pages were something out of the ordinary especially since it seems the editor made an honest attempt to go along with what the readers wanted. To blame the editor for the Target and Blue Bolt turned into would be wrong. It was mainly the fault of the readers--or the parents if the blame is to be placed on the really guilty party. Novelty was one of the most conservative publishers and gave in to pressure by parents to remove and drop features. Parents wrote a great many letters to the editor which were published with pride by the editor for their backing.

Usually the editor took a small part of the letter page to converse with the readers and the remainder was letters from the readers. Small print was used and a large number of letters were published each issue. The early letter pages were the best but were usually written by children wanting only humor features. It seemed Tarzhawk and Blue Bolt were to fantastic and had too much horror. Some issues sometimes devoted the full column to readers who wrote about the amount of saving stamps they bought or the good the column did to promote the sale of saving stamps. Other columns asked that the readers "Back the Victoy Loan", plant victory gardens, support infantile paralysis and the March of Dimes, "Back to the farm for vacation", and the National War Fund. In other issues saving bonds, the Liberty Bell or the Red Cross might make up the complete cover. Perhaps this was the reason for the lack of support by parents. Novelty comics were more than comics. They taught respect and support of their country as well. What I consider to be the better features--Blue Bolt, Sub-Man, The White Streak, Target and the Targeteers, and Space-Hawk (all costume heroes)--were for some unknown reason unwanted by the children. In the letter columns, they were hardly mentioned but the praise was mainly for the other features. It has occurred to me that these were continued to hold the costume loving readers and the other features were the main drawing card. They featured two reading audiences with one comic. At any rate, the above characters are the main reason for this article.

THE WHITE STREAK

On early covers of Target Comics, it was sometimes hard to tell if this or WHITE STREAK was the name of the comic. On these WHITE STREAK was proclaimed boldly across the cover while the word Target was greatly reduced in size and found along the spine. It would appear that the editor was giving some thought to renaming the title and calling it WHITE STREAK. And they might have as The White Streak was the cover feature and holder of the lead spot.

Apparently the origin of the White Streak was in Target #1 but in #5 the text story giving the origin was written by Stockbridge Winslow, a house name I would presume. Early issues of both Target and Blue Bolt often had text stories that continued about those issues and were signed Stockbridge Winslow, a name that does not have the ring of sounding true. In later text stories, Roy Hill, Mickey Spillane and Bob Butts all had the writting tasks. Which or any one might have been Winslow. From what I've been able to gather, the top stars rotated in turn, or some other such technique, in the text stories. In Target #5, the White Streak, as he would be called it, was born in the tenth century in an advanced civilization in South America. It seems that this country of Utopis was very prosperous and the people were living a live of ease. However, their neighbors were a warlike people who envied the luxury of life in Utopis. These warlike Melitans then planned an invasion of Utopis so that they could share in this easy life. Lagar, who was the leader of Utopis, didn't listen to the warnings of possible attack. When it finally did come, the Melitans swarmed over the city, killing and looting with no regard for life. Lagar and his council fled up the slopes of a dead volcano where they decided that the only way to save their country was to build a robot army. For fifty years, they labored mining a special ore to build the robots. Lagar also built a special robot to lead the robot army. This robot was named Manowar or The White Streak. I can only guess that the robots either defeated the army of the Melitas or that the weapons of war were so powerful that all the humansand all the robots except Manowar were destroyed. In 1940, Dr. Simms, who was exploring a dead volcano from which a hill had recently appeared, found White Streak in a cave. As told in the text, Manowar tells Dr. Simms that he is a servant dedicated to peace. He then defeats dictator Don Ruizen who was killing men so as to gain control of their oil wells. After a quick victory, he leaves for America to help bust up plans of agents aiding the growing war in Europe.

After the first few issues, White Streak lost his identity as a robot. He seemed to become more human all the time. If you recall the origin of the HUMAN TORCH, he too was a robot who lost his identity of being a robot--or at least I was never aware he was while reading the stories. Carl Burgos was the artist of both the original Torch and White Streak as well as another character that appeared in Amazing Man Comics. This third hero was The Iron Skull who was a human with the top of his head replaced by an iron plate. Burgos had a fascinating desire to have his heroes part robot and part human or vice versa. It is not impossible that Carl Burgos created both White Streak and the Human Torch, as well as wrote many of the early stories. I would imagine that after the introduction of both heroes, the editors decided that both would sell better if their origin as robots were forgotten. Another similar incident is that both joined a law agency but White Streak went one better. He not only joined the F. B. I. but temporarily gave up his costume. His companions still called him "Streak" so apparently he had no alter-ego.

One incident that was puzzling was that after White Streak joined the FBI,I never could understand if he had a face under his helmet/mask or just what. The mask started above the upper lip and continued up to the hair line which was green in place of hair. The features below the mask looked almost human. Thanks to Henry Steel who explained why the White Streak looked human after he joined the FBI. "In Target #10, Manowar changes to civilian clothes and joins the FBI. The changeover is accomplished simply by plastic surgery. The way in which this was handled leaves me wondering if Manowar's appearance was created by a mask or if he just naturally had a hardshell upper face. After the plastic surgery, he is changed to a brown-haired clean-cut type." I would assume that since White Streak wanted a permanent disguise to fight fifth columnists and saboteurs and remain unknown he had no human face under the mask.

While working for the FBI, White Streak worked mainly on cases of sabotage. But unlike the rest of the members of the G-Men he was gifted with special powers which included the ability to shoot high entensity electrons from his eyes and later x-ray vision. The electrons coming from his eyes looked like lightning bolts and he was able to shoot these over a considerable distance. Also he was able to create a step ladder of electron bolts and travel on these through the sky.

While working on a case for the FBI, White Streak was captured and held in a building which exploded. The following issue, a new costume hero, the RED SEAL, suddenly appeared to avenge the death of the White Streak. At this time, the story line kept the identity of the Red Seal a mystery. If it was revealed, I have not seen the story.

In Volume 2, #6 of Target Comics, the Red Seal was captured and tied behind a motor boar in an attempt to drown him. Suddenly a lightning bolt cut through his ropes and racing across the cap

on a ladder created from his eyes appeared the White Streak. After rounding up their prisoners, White Streak explains his miraculous survival. "The explosion must have thrown a live wire across my body and the electricity converted me into an electrical mass, keeping me in suspended animation until now. So here I am in my original form". His original form was his tight fitting costume and no longer the human looking FBI member. It was a short time before the end--only four issues. During these four issues, White Streak and Red Seal joined forces and were to become the earliest team-up I know of. The Streak remained in costume until the end. I'm surprised he was dropped as he and the Red Seal made a good team and even by himself the White Streak was a much better character than many characters that were continued in Target and Blue Bolt Comics. Usually the letter column gave some hint as to why a character was being dropped but not in this case. Apparently the parents didn't care for him and as a result he was quickly dropped.

THE SPACEHAWK

Five issues after the first issue of Target, a hero that is still remembered by any collector living during this era appeared. He, of course, was SPACEHAWK by Basil Wolverton. The art was so excellent the stories can hardly be forgotten. Wolverton had, and still has, a culcus style, different from all other artists. During his entire career in the field of illustrating comics, Basil Wolverton lived in Vancouver, Washington, 3,000 miles from the editorial offices in New York. He was not forced to collaborate closely with other staff men and couldn't have even if he had wanted to. Spacehawk was all Mr. Wolverton. He plotted, wrote, drew, inked, and lettered all his own art.

Spacehawk was one of the earliest outer space heroes developed for comics and was very good. Many will not agree with me on this subject but I didn't care for the style in which inhabitants from other planets were drawn. They were usually long necked and had tentacles for arms or were drawn in another hideous fashion.

As a child, I thought of Wolverton's art as grotesque but after recently studying it as an adult I realized that I didn't know enough about art at the time to appreciate it. Wolverton was a one style artist, one for serious and another for comedy, both engaging and unique. What made the art unique was the large amount of lines in the art. The artist didn't rely on heavy shadowing but used many small lines. This must have taken a lot of time but was well worth the effort from a fans point of view. For some reason, Bill Everett, who has recently started drawing the Hulk for Marvel, is about the closest comparison I can think of.

Spacehawk first appeared in Target #5 without an introduction or origin as was common. "With the coming of interplanetary travel, the legions of the law find it impossible to cope with the elements, killers, and other criminals lurking in space...and then, apparently out of nowhere comes the superhuman enemy of crime, the mysterious SPACEHAWK!" This is a quote from his first appearance. The only other piece of information to help learn of his origin is in Target #7 when the Spacehawk tells that he came to this solar system which means he wasn't of or from Earth or any of the planets which orbit the sun. The first stories were entirely interplanetary with Spacehawk fighting evil on all the planets of the solar system. It is doubtful if Basil Wolverton even bothered to have a rational reason or origin in mind when he created Spacehawk and powers were added as they were needed. If this is true, he did a good job of holding together the powers of the character and didn't have loose ends as many heroes did and some do today. For such an early period, Wolverton did an excellent job of portraying excitement in the future. His knowledge of what the future might hold was quite well done with an amazing ability to draw "nuts and bolts". One would think that he was unable to draw human, or at least goodlooking humans. Spacehawk and the women in his early stories were supposed to be goodlooking but seldom were.

I doubt if all the inhabitants from wherever Spacehawk originated had his powers. He wasn't super powerful as was Superman but he was far more powerfull than the average human. It was never clearly stated just how strong Spacehawk was supposed to be. I did notice that he used his bare hands to break through a steel wall and in another he used a cutting tool to cut through the wall of a submarine. He was never hit by a bullet but was once hit on the head with a wrench and not knocked out. Yet in this latter incident he was overpowered by brute force and knocked down. At other times he was paralyzed by a dart gun and rendered unconscious by gas. He was able to sense danger and could feel vibrations of objects he was hunting for such as villains who had escaped. In early stories he was very capable of killing those who deserved it without mercy as he did when he left Gorvak to be devoured by a protoplasm of living blob which he intended for Spacehawk. He did have a hand weapon of some sort which he used occasionally. However like all first class costume heroes he was ready to charge his enemy with his hard right cross. For the first three stories, Spacehawk was masked and aided by robots dressed just as he was. To the villains it seemed that as soon as Spacehawk was killed, he would appear again alive and kicking. These amazing robots obeyed Spacehawk's telepathic commands. He also had a large assortment of scientific gadgets such as anti-gravity material built into his costume to lift him.

After a short time as an interplanetary strip--issues #5-15--pressures from parents and young children against the grotesque appearances of aliens forced Spacehawk to adopt a new line of existance. In the first letter column, one fan asked that the editor "cut down on the exaggerations of Spacehawk". Another fan wrote that he was to fantastic and from then on the editor received no rest. Young readers continued writing that Spacehawk was too "fantastic" and the editor asked Basil Wolverton to cut down on the horror. The strip suffered. Spacehawk was no longer billed as the "Lone Wolf of the Void" but instead as "Defender of America" which was a role that wasn't cut out for Spacehawk. He battled saboteurs, tire theives, and similar threats against the United States that were common place for any costume or super hero but not quite suited for Spacehawk. The stories were still well written and illustrated but not in the old Spacehawk flavor. The start of this "down to earth" type of adventures was in Volume 2 #2 when he offered his services to the President of the U.S. While many other comics received complaints, it seems that Novelty didn't ignore them but tried to please the parents. In issue #28, the editor states: "This is just another proof or testimonial of parents expressed directly or indirectly through their children that TARGET GET satisfactorily fills a craving for exciting adventure and interesting reading with no retrogression from the highest moral plane." This might suggest that Novelty did edit its comics with parents in mind for two reasons. First because parents might buy the comics for their children and secondly that parents might not buy adult magazines affiliated with Curtis if the comics didn't come around to the parents way of thinking.

Even though his space adventures were cut short, Spacehawk's greatest antagonist, Dr. Gore, appeared in Target Volume 2 #9. Spacehawk was making a few minor changes in his spaceship so it would perform in earth's heavy atmosphere. The blackhearted Dr. Gore, "Elusive Mastermind of Science", was watching his moves from his mountain hideout. Dr. Gore made his first mistake when he sent a brutish hulk to capture Spacehawk. Spacehawk turned the tables and returned the one sent to capture him to Dr. Gore. In the end, Dr. Gore was thought to be destroyed in his mountain laboratory but returned again and again to plague Spacehawk.

The parents and unappreciative youngsters forced Wolverton to stop the horror that appeared in early stories. Beings from other planets were temporarily dropped from the strip. Dork, a thing from outer space,appeared in Volume 2 #8 to help Spacehawk battle Dr. Gore. However, the appearance of Dork was toned down although he was orange in color with larger than average ears he did not have the horrifying looks of early creatures. Dork returned to aid Spacehawk in the following issue and might have appeared in other stories also.

Henry Steel sent Novelty a letter along with over 500 signatures asking that Spacehawk be revived in 1946. However, he was quite unhappy concerning the part of the letter which was printed in the letter page of Volume 6 #8. The editor did print the letter as he wrote it but not the part pertaining to the revival of Spacehawk. The part of the letter which was printed had nothing to do with the main subject. This is proof that some of these letters appearing in letters pages might have been used to say only what the editor wanted to be said. Apparently his letter did some good for shortly after sending his letter to the editor, Wolverton wrote Henry that he had been to see the editor of Novelty. "(The editor) told him he planned to put in some new adventure stories now that the war was over and asked Wolverton if he'd like to do another space travel story--perhaps even revive Spacehawk. Well, as I read this part of his letter, I was highly elated and felt that my petition of signatures might have done some good. But Basil went on to say that he refused because at that time he had all he could handle with humor style material and that humor material was easier for him to do. Well, that deflated my elation. After all, I'd been wasting my time trying to get Spacehawk put back when Wolverton wasn't even interested in it! The last straw would have been a revival of Spacehawk drawn by one of Novelty's wretched hacks." The above quotation is a letter from Henry sent to me.

Spacehawk lasted until Volume 3 #10, December, 1942. He was in BLUE BOLT #105 and 106 which were reprints and will be discussed later in this article. Spacehawk recently made an appearance in Super Reprints, Eerie #15, and hopefully others will appear in the near future as Super has started reprinting stuff from the Novelty line.

THE TARGET AND THE TARGETEERS

Though White Streak was an excellent strip, the editor of Target was poking around for something better to replace it as cover and lead feature and thought they had found it in the Target and Targeteers. They have the distinction of being the first feature to appear named after a title that was already being published. In Target #10, the first story of the Target appeared. He started out as cover feature and looks as tho he might have been drawn by Simon and Kirby of by an artist drawing in their style. In the first episode only the Target appeared and the Targeteers weren't mentioned directly. The gimmick was this: in the initial yarn, the Target succeeds in being in three places the same time. The initial episode which was drawn by Dick Hamilton had the story starting with a newspaper carrying a full page ad warning criminals to go straight...or else! That same evening, the Target's voice came over a nationwide broadcast with the same warning to criminals. In the next panel, a crook in a poolroom receives the same warning but this time in a telegram and others are called on a telephone and told "Beware, the Target is watching." I think this was or should have been enough to cause any crook to go straight. The story proper starts when Boss Barone of New York plans to steal a formula for a new high explosive which will kill anyone within an eight mile radius and sell it to spies. While Boll Barone is telling his men of his plans, the Target's voice comes over the radio and personally warns Barone not to try stealing the formula. Even after the warning, the Barone carries through his plan and breaks into the home of the inventor, James H. Philpp, only to find the Target setting at his desk. In short time, the Target wraps up the gang and leaves them on a telephone pole by police headquarters. The Target in the only one who appears in #10 but back in the newspaper office, the city editor had three reporters out looking for the Target and each of them call within a few minutes of each other saying he has seen the Target. One says he saw the Target in Bronx in a yellow and black universe another reporter says he saw Target running across Time Square in a red and black uniform; and the third says he saw a blue and black Target running past the aquarium in the Battery. I would imagine the editor of the newspaper, as well as the readers of the first appearance of the Target, was puzzled by the mention of three different Targets. The last panel in the story asks: "Who is the Target...the identity of this amazing character is revealed in the December issue of Target Comics." In the following issue, it was revealed that there were 3 heroes all dressed in similar costumes with diferent colored boots and shirt and trunks. All three had a black belt, tights, gloves, and hood.

A flashback of the origin was givein in an early issue but didn't give much information. It did show Dave Foster and Tom Brown (the Targeteers) save Miles Reed (the Target) from some gangsters. I would assume that from this they decided to join together and fight crime. Besides their natural powers, each wore a bullet proof vest under the targets on their chests. The ideawas that if crooks failed to shoot at them they would naturally aim at the targets. In early stories they had small darts for weapons but this was soon abandoned.

After their first appearance, the covers and stories were taken over by Bob Wood. He tried very successfully to imitate the style used by Bob Kane on Batman which was quite popular during this period. At times the Wood characters were better drawn than those by Bob Kane. Since Bob Wood wrote many of the stories for Lev Gleason later, it is natural to assume that he also wrote the Target stories, as well as illustrated them. I have no certain way of knowing but I think that the editor of Novelty liked for the artists to write their own stories. In many letter columns the editored mentioned that certain artists wrote their stories.

In the beginning the Target had ten pages which was common but Bob Wood would draw as many as 12 panels per page which wasn't common. With Wood doing the art and stories, the Target and the Targeteers couldn't help but be a good strip. The early stories were at first continued stories with great villians like "Hammerfist and Mighty Mite". Another was inventive genius Fred Hartley, a scientist who had an accident while developing a gas to help America win the war. The gas accidently released in his face and he was forced to wear a rubber mask. I believe his mind was also affected and when his invention was rejected by the Army he turned to crime. Cutting in on a radio program, he threatened to blow up a certain building and signed off saying he was the Target. When the building blew up on schedule, the police were looking for the Target as the guilty person but in the end Fred Hartley was caught and all ended well. Bob Wood handled the art for less than ten issues and Sid Greene took over the art. Greene wasn't quite asgood an artist as was Bob Wood but much better than other artists to follow. A few issue later, Kit Carter the Cadet replaced the Target and the Targeteers as cover and lead feature. After Volume 3 #3, the Target seldom was cover feature although he did hold his own as a strong second favorite. In much later issues of the letter page, a suggestion was made to drop the Targeteers and call Target TARGETMAN. For a good number of issues, readers discussed why or why not this should happen but nothing came of it. I think the editor printed the letter simply to give the readers something to write about. It was quite common for the editor to ask about a certain strip and ask the "associated editors" to comment as to whether or not to keep a strip and if it were to be replaced, with what type.

Sid Greene handled the art for awhile but other artists to do the strip were far below the caliber of Wood and Greene. One artist, who's art would be found in many of the Novelty comics and who was with the company the longest but never signed his name, took over shortly or directly after Greene. He was [illegible] Ken Batterfield, an artist who did work for Medor, and later Certs who is now doing J'onn J'onzz. Others also handled it but never signed their word and were not known artists.

In early stories, Miles Reed used the cover of an author writing a crime book as a means of nosing around police headquarters.

Later all three joined the armed forces as it seems Novelty had all its characters out on uniforms. One joined the Navy, the other the Army and the third the Marines. They acted as a special spying force. By this time their double identity was no longer a secret as I recall they changed into their target costumes in front of their commanding officers. After the war they started a detective agency and continued the practice of changing into their costume while others were watching. They also took on a secretary who often helped crack a case. The team also called each other by their given names while in costume. These and later stories were very poor when compared with Bob Wood's excellent art and stories. The Target and the Targeteers outlasted all other Novelty costume heroes and last appeared in Volume 10 #1 which was two issues before the title was dropped completely. They were reprinted in BLUE BOLT #102 and 103.

Bulls-Eye Bill Target appeared in the first issue and the art was by Bill Everett tho he signed his work Everett Blake. Apparently Bill Everett was raised in the southwest as a great deal of his early comic art took place in this area. The strip wasn't bad in the begining as it gave the impression of days in the "old west" but when World War II started, Bulls-Eye Bill was suddenly updated and joined the army.

Jack Cole's art appeared in Target #1-4 where he did the "Hi-grass Twins", a strip about twin hillbillies. "T-Men" was another short lived strip done by an equally famous artist--Joe Simon. It was a strip just like ano other you could find in fifty different comics during this era. The art by Simon was nothing out of the ordinary and if Joe Simon's signature hadn't appeared on the splash page I doubt if anything would be mentioned about the strip. Larry Antonstter who did Sub-Zero Man also worked on this strip after Simon gave it up.

2-R, a story about a fantastic city with a cosmic force wall surrounding "Boy State", was also in early issues. Bad kids were sent there to be straightened out. The dress, planes, cars, etc. were all in a future design. The art by Alonzo Vincent was similar in style to Bill Everett's work on the Hulk but still different. Early issues also had "City Editor", "The Sapp Family",a two page text story, "Fantastic Feature Films", "Rip Rory, Four-Letter Man at State College, and "Lucky Byrd" who was a flying cadet. A strip of some significance was the CHAMELEON who was originally drawn by Bob Davis and later by Bill Everett for a few issues. The characters were much like those in the DICK COLE stories while Da vis handled the art, always moving or showing action. A lot of article were to draw the Chameleon but I only enjoyed the stories when handled by Bill Everett as his art often helped to cover up the poor stories.

Changes were made in later issues with Kit Carter the Cadet being added and Gary Stark by Don Rico plus a number of humor strips to the later years.

NEW WORLD

Shortly after Target appeared on the news stands, Novelty decided to release it's second title which was Blue Bolt Comics. In June, 1940 it joined Target and the hundreds of other titles that were being quickly bought up and read by the fans of the day.

Although Blue Bolt never had as many good strips as did Target, it did have the best of all strips to appear in the Novelty line. This was no other than the Blue Bolt. Unfortunately, the quality of Blue Bolt was short lived and the only other top strip was "Dick Cole". Unlike Target, Blue Bolt Comics didn't have the abbundance of new and superior strips added to it as did Target.

"A young American struck by lightning has been hurled into the subterranean land of Deltos! Dr. Bertoff, scientist and ruler of Deltos, revived him with injections of radium and has harnessed the power of his body! So was born the Blut Bolt". (See Pictorial Origins by Bill Dubay in TCR #44.)

The origin story of Blue Bolt in Blue Bolt Comics #1 was very lacking. As Fred Farrish, Harvard football star, practiced with two friends a sudden lightning storm broke. It is explained that they are at a "secluded mountain estate" Which looked as if it were centered in the Grand Canyon from the appearance of the location. When lightning struck and killed his two companions, Fred Farrish quickly took off in his airplane. As soon as he cleared the mountains a bolt of lightning struck his plane and it crashed into an almost bottomless canyon. The reason I said the origin was lacking is that the location doesn't resemble an estate in that no mansion or signs of civilization are shown. If it were an estate, why didn't he make his way to a house instead of taking off over mountains in the middle of a storm?

As the airplane flys over the mountains and plunges into the canyon, a group of devilish figures watched the plane crash. The leader, Dr. Bertoff, looks almost happy about the incident. Taking Fred Farrish, who is unconscious, the procession wound underground far into the earth. The reader then discovers that Dr. Bertoff and his band are not of the surface world and that they are not evil as one first believed. Dr. Bertoff places him on a slanted operation table much like one shown in many Frankenstein movies. It is explained that Dr. Bertoff has managed to capture the power of the lightning and has chemically harnessed them in Fred Farrish's body with the aid of radium deposits. With these powers it is hoped that he will lead the legions of Dr. Bertoff against the Green Sorceress. The Green Sorceress is a descendent of a long line of evil black magicians and plans to enslave both Deltos and the surface world with radium which is guarded by Dr. Bertoff. He gives Fred Farrish a costume and twin guns and the name of Blue Bolt. He charges Blue Bolt to carry on where he has failed.

Blue Bolt is perhaps one of the better creations of Joe Simon and later Jack Kirby. Joe Simon worked solo on the first stories of Blue Bolt but was soon joined by Jack Kirby. The art for the first few stories would have to be considered slightly inferior to later work, especially the figures. Starting with the second issue the art slowly improved so that with the addition of Jack Kirby the change was hardly noticable unless the art is studied closely. When Jack joined the strip, the lines of the character became harder and the machinery which both artists draw so well took chance for the better. Jack Kirby's talent for drawing furturistic laboratory apparatus has always stood out and in Blue Bolt such machinery could be found. As for the story line, it didn't change after Kirby started contributing. The stories were serials with each story having its own ending and the following episode continuing with the same basic plot.

All the earlier stories had to do with Blue Bolt battling to stop the Green Sorceress. The the rest of her kingdom was normal, the Green Sorceress had green skin and orange hair. She was just what her name implied. No origin of how she gained her magic powers or where she came from was given.

For Simon and Kirby fans, they might be interested in knowing that Simon worked on Blue Bolt in June, 1940, which was the date of the first issue and Kirby joined the team with either #4 or #5. This means that Simon and Kirby worked together on Blue Bolt a few months before teaming up on Captain America which was dated March, 1941. The early issues of the Blue Bolt were quite good, mainly because the situation and location were unique. Since Simon and Kirby have usually written all their own stories, I'd assume that Simon and perhaps Kirby wrote the Blue Bolt stories. At any rate, they were some of the better stories published by Novelty Press. For some unknown reason, there was a slight difference between the art in Captain America and Blue Bolt. I liked the Blue Bolt more than Captain America.

The land of Deltos was far superior to the world of the surface in 1940. Its cities and armies looked like something out of the distant future. As for the story line, Blue Bolt usually won out over the Green Sorceress at the end of each story. For some reason, Blue Bolt was in love with the beautiful Green Sorceress. But because of her evil desire to gain control of the world, nothing could come of it as far as Blue Bolt was concerned. There were a few times when Blue Bolt believed that she had reformed but they were short lived. Once she was accidently shot by Blue Bolt and Dr. Bertoff saved her life with an injection of vandreline and she awakens with amnesia. In issue #3 after Blue Bolt had been stunned by a paralyser ray, the Green Sorceress came to his aid blasting her own men until a general in her own "green army" shot her with a para-gun. Later an explosion returned her memory and again she considered Blue Bolt her nemesis tho she is also in love with him.

The best story in this series appeared in Blue Bolt #5 and, of course, was the work of Simon and Kirby. The Green Sorceress had ordered the "Unholy One", a hideous monster to locate a certain book of black magic. After he had found the book and gave it to her, she ordered a machine built which allowed her green army to enter the fourth dimension. Somehow the green army disappeared and reappeared in Deltos. They were able to destroy and disappear into the earth for protection. It was Dr. Bertoff who discovered a machine to send Blue Bolt into the same dimension, arriving on what looked like another world. The army of Blue Bolt was quick to follow him into the fourth dimension and defeat the green army. The Green Sorceress was captured by a monster known as a Dream Plant while trying to escape. Blue Bolt came to her rescue by jabbing a spear into the monster's eye. The Green Sorceress then quickly dissopeared in a cloud of green smoke and reappeared safely in her own kingdom, vowing vengeance for her defeat.

I'm not sure how but in #6 the Green Sorceress has Blue Bolt convinced she is reformed and has given up her dreams of conquest. It is then that Dr. Bertoff finally succeeds in contacting the surface world with a giant telescreen. They then witness the methods of Hitler's army in overcoming the free nations of the world. Seeing this, the Green Sorceress is again obsessed with a desire to gain control of both worlds. She uses the methods she saw on the telescreen and prepares to attack as soon as her mighty army is restored. The Blue Bolt, quite by accident, discovers her plot and his army stops the blitzkreig as well as the fifth column before it has a chance to succeed. After seeing all is lost, she begins to disappear in her green aura but this time Blue Bolt dives into the green cloud. Much to his surprise he finds himself ambushed by her royal guards and overcome by a powerful paralyzer gun and later placed on a pedestial in a frozen state. In the following issue Dr. Bertoff is forced to surrender his city in order to save Blue Bolt's life. While mining the radium they need for their conquest of the surface world, the bungling efforts of the conquerors caused a terrific explosion that moved the crust of the surface world as well as opened a tunnel to the world above. Two men of the Green Army followed the tunnel and discovered two men and a woman near the entrance of the tunnel. Not knowing anything of the new world they were in, these surface scientists were allowed to look over Deltos. From hearing parts of the conversations of soldiers of the green army, they soon learned of The Blue Bolt and the conquest of Deltos. Later that night one of the scientists thres a gas bomb into the cell of Blue Bolt and after the guards are unconscious revives him with an injection. With both lightning guns blasting and his fists clearing a path through the enemy, Blue Bolt charges through a steel door to rescue Dr. Bertoff. They quickly escaped to their own city which was still under the control of the green army. Suddenly, the inhabitants dug out hidden weapons, grouped, and attacked their conquerors who were soon overpowered and forced to surrender.

Blue Bolt's success was short lived for after only nine action filled issues in the land of Deltos, Simon and Kirby were to leave the strip. Until recently I believed the adventures in Deltos were discontinued because the new author was incapable of doing these. However, from reading the letter pages I've found that Blue Bolt had the same problem that plagued Spacehawk--parents and young children. Both wrote that Blue Bolt was too fantastic, and the stories had too much horror. I suspect that either Simon or Kirby had more work for Timely than they could handle and was willing to leave Blue Bolt or that they refused to change the stories and had to be replaced. At any rate, Simon and Kirby did give up the strip and with issue #10 Blue Bolt came to thesurface world to fight crime here.

The first issue on the surface had Blue Bolt battling aboard a ship under attack. Oddly, he didn't appear in a costume during much of the battle. After Simon and Kirby's excellent stories,the remainder of his career was quite dull. For a short time, Blue Bolt fought against the Nazis with Dr. Bertoff and the Green Sorceress forgotten. When Alan Mandel took over the art Blue Boltt became just another costumed hero with little appeal. On the surface world he had lost much of his power. He could no longer fly or burst through steel walls. He was still somewhat stronger than the ordinary human but only a shadow of his former self. And without Simon and Kirby, the strip is no longer worthy of detailed comment. Alan Mandel did try to imitate Simon and Kirby's style but lacked the ability to show the action they had used.

With Volume 3 #8 the costume was gone and the title changed to "Blue Bolt, the American" which was the low rung of the ladder. He became a news reporter and along the way picked up a side-kick to add humor to the stories. He became just an adventure seeking noncostume character as numerous others had before and after him. After Mandel, Jack Harmon took over the art and the less said about it the better.

Blue Bolt was soon to lose cover feature to "Dick Cole, Wonder Boy". He had not been cover feature while Simon and Kirby handled the art but slowly nosed Blue Bolt out of cover and lead feature afterwards. As mentioned before, Blue Bolt didn't have many fave letters in the letter column but Dick Cole did. Why Blue Bolt wasn't better received will remain a mystery.

Not terribly important, there were a few inconsistencies in the costume of the early issues. The first issue showed him

on the cover with a red belt and cape plus yellow gloves and buccaneer boots along with a small lightning insignia on the helmet. Inside he wore no belt or holster tho he did carry the lightning gun. Instead of gloves, around his wrist he had yellow cuff bands quite similar to those worn by Captain Marvel. By the second issue a holster but not a belt was added and by the third issue a belt and gloves had been added. Sometimes he had two guns and holsters and sometimes one.

The last issue of Blue Bolt Comics was Volume 10 #1, December of 1949. A short time after Novelty Press gave up the comic field STAR PUBLICATIONS took over Blue Bolt Comics and reprinted many of the Novelty stories that appeared in Target and Blue Bolt. It is very doubtful if there was a #100 and the first known issue of Star Publication was #101. They had no method of reprinting early stories but did reprint late 1940's tales of Target and the Targeteers, Blue Bolt who was not in costume, Candid Charlie and Rick Richards in #101-103. In issues #105-107, older and better material was reprinted. The first three stories of Blue Bolt were reprinted as well as the origin of Sub-Zerro Man taken from BB #1. Also along with Blue Bolt and Sub-Zero Man was Basil Wolverton's SPACEHAWK.

The only thing new about the second Blue Bolt series was the covers by L. B. Cole. Also the inside coloring was different in most cases. Blue Bolt's costume, which I always thought was dull, look much better in the reprints. His new costume had a yellow shirt, tights, and helmet visor with a lue helmet, lightning insignia, cuffs, trunks and boots. Wherras the original art had the signature of the artists, the reprints did not.

Issues in the late teens appeared as BLUE BOLT WEIRD. What hespened between issues #107 and about 1 4 is a mystery to me. It appears that Super Reprints have the right to reprint all material from the Novelty line as well as Blue Bolt Weird.

One of the main faults with the early issues of Blue Bolt Comics was the covers. Blue Bolt who appeared as the cover feature was usually drawn by an artist who was unfamiliar with his costume and didn't quite draw it as it should have been. Simon and Kirby had a hand in a few but not all covers. When Dick Cole became the cover feature the quality of the cover art improved mainly because it was done by Bill Everett.

Besides Blue Bolt, other characters to appear in #1 were Sub-Zero Man, Sergeant Spook, Superhorse, Phantom Sub, Dick Cole, Runaway Ronson and for humor there was Pony Tracks.

The Sub-Zero Man who was the first hero of his type came from Venus instead of the earth. The origin shows a spaceship from Venus attempting to reach earth when suddenly a frozen asteroid appears in the ships path. Instead of crashing into it as expected, the ship passes through because the asteroid wasn't solid but frozen gas instead. All members of the crew are frozen and appear to be dead except one who moves to a window and sees that the ship is about to crash on earth. He quickly regains control of the ship and is able to land it. After discovering that the others are

dead, he decides to explore this new world. Upon entering a house he happens to walk between two atomic rays which two scientists had been working with. The atomic ray does not kill him but instead turns him to his normal unfrozen form, losing the blue-white color of an icicle. He soon finds that he has the ability to freeze anything after he has been out of contact with the atomic ray for a few minutes. Deciding that the police might think that he had killed the other crew members, he goes back to the ship to destroy it with a small atomic pistol. Instead, the ray from the gun turns him back into a normal person. A minute later he became Sub-Zero Man again and races away. Because the people of earth don't understand his powers and don't realize he hasn't control over his freezing power, he is soon hunted by the law. As the first story ends, he saves a small town from destruction by running in front of water rushing down a valley from a busted dam and freezing it.

By the second story, Sub-Zero Man is a hero and has gained a great amount of control over his power. For the first few issues the art was by Larry Antonette and though not terrific it is passing. His costume consisted of red trunks, a red sleveless shirt, and white trim on the arms and collar and brown boots. With #5, Will Everett was doing the art and Sub-Zero Man looked much like Everett's Sub-Mariner. Everett also gave the hero a new costume. Sub-Zero Man had improved both in control of his powers and as a costumed hero under Everett. Unfortunately Everett didn't stay with the strip very long. While under Everett, Sub-Zero Man had control over freezing things with his hands, eyes, and mouth. The hero was soon taken over by other artists and lasted until Volume 4 #8, March, 1948.

Also in the first issue was the White Rider and his superhorse, a cowboy strip. It left me cold and in my opinion is hardly good enough to be mentioned nor was the Phantom Sub which might be the forerunner of "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea". The Phantom Sub was signed FOS which were the initials of three different men--Flinton who wrote and lettered the strip, O'Connor who did the pencils, and Sansone who did the inking.

Sergeant Spook who was killed during a chemical explosion in a police laboratory and remained on earth in his spirit form was also introduced in the first issue. Tho he was a ghost, he was able to touch earthly things but nothing earthly was able to touch him. Since nothing could harm him he had no weakness which was reason enough for it not being a good strip. In issue #5, Jesse James returned from "Ghost Town" and robbed a train. Sgt. Spook tried to stop him but was shot with a "ghost gun" which paralyzed him for an hour. Sergeant Spook finally captured Jesse and his gang and took them back to "Ghost Town". In following issues, Jesse James was tried by a jury, Napoleon tried to take over "Ghost Town", and Spook took a flight into Biljo left to raid the high seas. To my way of thinking, these were pretty ridiculous stories.

Runaway Ronson, a strip about an engineer who built a super streamliner was the first strip to be dropped from Blue Bolt. It's a good thing because how many stories can be written about a super train? Paul Gustason was the artist and as always he did a good job. The most unusual introduction for a costume hero appeared in Blue Bolt Volume 2 #1, dated June, 1941. This was the strip which replaced Runaway Ronson. On the letter page which was on the inside cover the following message appeared: "Dear readers, as you read the thrilling Dick Cole episode wherein he meets his "double" and also Sub-Zero, and several of the other features in this Blue Bolt issue, you will probably be puzzled by the sweep of a tornado popping up unexpectedly in the plots. Yes, it's a surprise but we won't give it away--it's too good. Wait until you get to the last story in the magazine. It's a real treat. Will you write and tell us how you like it?"

The Dick Cole story had a strange gray circling wind picking up a bundle from the water and flinging it into the arms of a police officer. The bundle was evidence that Dick Cole wasn't guilty of a robbery. In the following story, the same strange swirling wind saves Sub-Zero Man from death at the end of the story. In the Blue Bolt story his plane is in a dive straight towards the ground. Out of nowhere the same mysterious wind lifts the plane out of the deadly dive. For the confused readers, the page following the Blue Bolt story cleared all doubts as it states: "Have you been wondering who the strange character was that appeared so mysteriously in other stories in this book? If so, here is your answer." Above the logo appears "introducing...the TWISTER by Paul Gustavson". This was the editor's way of introducing a new hero. I'm surprised that it wasn't splashed all over the cover. It's the first time a new hero appeared without even his name being mentioned on the cover. The Twister was almost a carbon copy of the Flash but still he was different and much better than Runaway Ronson which he replaced. "A roaring cyclone suddenly and mysteriously appears! A daring figure rockets skyward...and moments later, parachutes to the ground! It's the famous TWISTER!" He had the power to move at lightning speed in the form of a twister or a cyclone and with all the deadly forces of one. Had it not been for his origin, he would habe been a good character but his origin was too ridiculous. It seems he was picked up by a twister as a youngster and suddenly found he was given full control overits powers.

Novelty's third title, 4 MOST, featured what the editor believed to be the better characters from Target and Blue Bolt Comics and the cover of the first issue had all the characters which were Dick Cole, the Target, Kit Carter, and Edison Bell battling the Japanese. The cover of #2 had them were fighting the Japanese. These covers were symbolic rather than a part of the stories that were inside. In all honesty, 4 MOST would have been better off had it never been published. Dick Cole and Kit Carter were both cadets at a military academy. I believe the popularity of both features can be traced back to Rip Rory, a young freshman in college, who started in TARGET #2 and was bullied by varisity players and finally forced them to make the first team. He didn't last long and soon after Dick Cole and Kit Carter appeared in their own stories. Undoubtedly the cadet type features were well received and they outlasted all other strips. The Target and the Targeteer didn't last long in 4 Most and were soon replaced by Candid Charlie or perhaps initially by another humor feature. The book soon became two years that a 1942 issue can be picked up for 25¢ today. A variety of artists handled Dick Cole--Bob Davis (the creator who wrote his own stories), Jim Wilcox, John Jordan, and possibly others. Kit Carter was drawn by John Jordon, Gates, Nina Albright, Walter Johnson, plus a lot of cross over artists. While Jim Wilcox might have been a better artist than Bob Davis, who was the first artist to handle Dick Cole, Bob Davis wrote his own stories and always showed action throughout the story. There seems to have been much of a story but Dick Cole was always moving in swift movement. Sometime between 1945 and 1950 there was an article in Writer's Digest with illustrations about how the Dick Cole scripts were written and drawn.

4 Most was the first title to go when things started falling out of the bottom of the barrel for the comic industry. 4 Most Volume 8 #5, September-October, 1949 was the last issue. Shortly after, STAR PUBLICATION, the same outfit that reprinted BLUE BOLT COMICS, did the same with 4 Most but renamed it 4 Most Boys Comics. Their first issue was #37 which was dated November-December of 1949. L. B. Cole who did 4 Most covers before Novelty gave it up continued doing the reprint covers. The issues of 4 Most Boys had mostly reprints of White Rider and Super Horse, Fearless Fellers, Kit Carter, and Edison Bell. It lasted until #40.

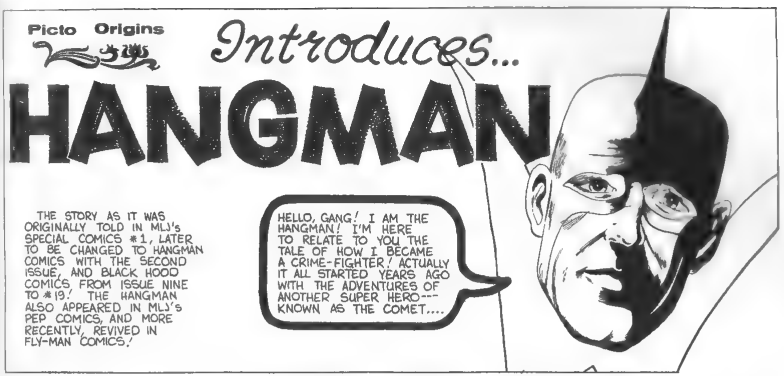
In closing I'd like to thank the staff at Novelty, as well as Raymond Miller, Bill Placzek, Rick Durell, Richard Kyle, Howard Keltner, and Henry Steel who all helped supply me with the necessary information.

Next issue Glen will be back with another article in his series of articles about the Justuce Society "Them Justice Guys". This is by special arrangement with Roy Thomas and Alter Ego. The art will again be done by the incomparable Biljo White. Be sure not to miss this study of the greatest comic strip to come from the GOLDEN AGE.

Picto Origins

Introduces... HANGMAN

THE STORY AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY TOLD IN MLJ's SPECIAL COMICS #1, LATER TO BE CHANGED TO HANGMAN COMICS WITH THE SECOND ISSUE, AND BLACK HOOD COMICS, FROM ISSUE NINE TO #19. THE HANGMAN ALSO APPEARED IN MLJ's PEP COMICS, AND MORE RECENTLY, REVIVED IN FLY-MAN COMICS.


HELLO, GANG! I AM THE HANGMAN! I'M HERE TO RELATE TO YOU THE TALE OF HOW I BECAME A CRIME-FIGHTER! ACTUALLY IT ALL STARTED YEARS AGO WITH THE ADVENTURES OF ANOTHER SUPER HERO--- KNOWN AS THE COMET....

A FEW DAYS LATER, AS I LEFT JOHN'S APARTMENT, MALONE'S THUGS, MISTAKING ME FOR MY BROTHER, STOPPED ME!
YOUR NAME DICKERING?
YES, BUT..
GET GOING!

THE POLICE ARRIVED AND IN THE EXCITEMENT I MANAGED TO GET MY BROTHER BACK TO HIS APARTMENT!
THIS IS IT, BOB! IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN! YOU-- THEL --GET MARRIED! LEAVE CRIME FIGHTING TO THE POLICE! TOO BIG A JOB FOR ONE MAN!

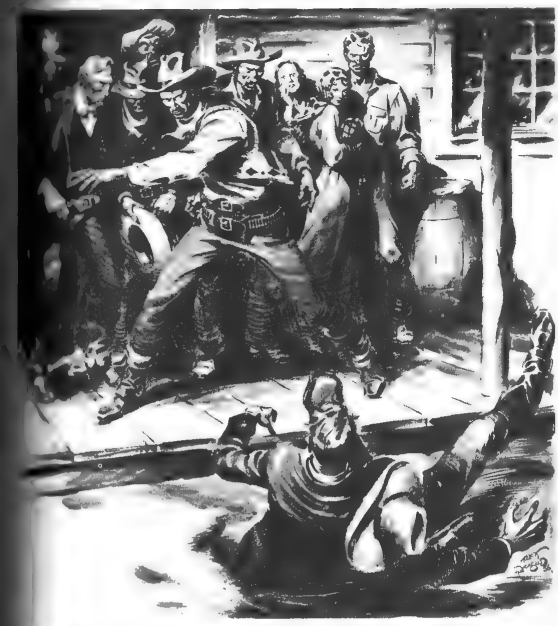
BUT I RESOLVED THAT JOHN'S DEATH WOULD BE AVENGED! I PLUNGED INTO THE TASK OF CREATING A CHANGE OF IDENTITY TO BE USED IN MY WAR WITH EVIL!

ONCE AROUND THE DECK BEFORE DINNER, MARGIE?
HEAVENS, NO! I'VE HAD ENOUGH EXERCISE FOR TODAY... I'LL MEET YOU IN THE LOUNGE.
WHAT A GLORIOUS MOON! IF RIP WERE ONLY HERE!
1950. King Features Synd inc. All rights reserved.

ALEX RAYMOND WAS BEST KNOWN FOR COMIC STRIPS LIKE RIP KIRBY

ALEX RAYMOND

ILLUSTRATOR



RAYMOND TOUCH IS UNMISTAKABLE IN THESE 1930S ILLUSTRATIONS

BY ALEX RAYMOND

Alex Raymond, who was killed in auto accident in September, 1956, a month before his 47th birthday, left a legacy of comic strip art which, in the words of cartoonist Al Williamson, "is the inspiration behind many artists in the field today."

Like many cartoonists, Raymond began his career as assistant to an established artist, in this case Russ Westover, creator of Tillie the Toiler. After that came work with Chic Young on Blondie and Lyman Young on Tim Tyler's Luck. In 1933, he ghosted the Tim Tyler Sunday strip and then, in January, 1934, blossomed out as a cartoonist in his own right with three strips: Flash Grodon, Jungle Jim and Dashiell Hammett's Secret Agent X-9. Midway through 1935, he gave up X-9 to concentrate on Flash Gordon and Jungle Jim.

Flash Gordon was an immediate success and it wasn't long before Universal produced one of the most expensive serials ever made based on the strip with Buster Crabbe in the title role. Two subsequent serials were made, Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars (1938) and Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe (1940). Other offshoots of the strip included a Flash Gordon radio series, comic books, Big Little Books, coloring books and even a short-lived pulp magazine, Flash Gordon Strange Adventure Magazine.

What isn't generally known is that Raymond also worked as an illustrator during the 1930s for such magazines as Collier's, Blue Book, Esquire and Look while he was doing Flash Gordon. He also did magazine covers, book jackets, movie advertisements, and book illustrations, but then decided to leave the field because he decided that "comic art is an art form in itself." On these pages, we present a few examples of Raymond's magazine work which show his unmistakeable touch.

His greatest work, however, was on his comic strips and Nostalgia Press has done a great service to his fans by issuing a hardcover collection of Flash Gordon Sunday pages which were originally published between 1938 and 1941. They deal with Flash's classic adventures on the planet Mongo with such unforgettable characters as Ming the Merciless, Dale Arden, Dr. Hans Zarkov, Queen Fria of Frigia, and the Powermen of Mongo.

After World War II service in the U.S. Marine Corps during which he reached the rank of major, Raymond returned to civilian life in 1946 with an idea for a new strip about a marine officer who becomes a criminologist. The name: Rip Kirby. He continued work on this highly successful strip until his untimely death.

BATMAN BEFORE ROBIN

By Biljo White

Out of the thousands and thousands of different comic books published since the early thirties, I have always considered BATMAN #1 (Spring, 1940) as the best all-around comic book ever published. If you are lucky enough to own this issue you'll know what I mean, and if not it'll be covered later. One of the interesting things about this initial copy of BATMAN is the fact he made his last appearence in solo action.

Just what sort of a crimefighter was Batman before he teamed up with Robin, the Boy Wonder? No doubt there are many younger fans who have no idea of The Batman of the late thirties. In an effort to answer many,many inquiries about the early days of Batman, I decided to sort through my life-long collection of old comics for the DETECTIVE COMICS which featured him.

Besides BATMAN #1, I found he appeared in solo action in issues #27 (May 1939) through #37 (March 1940) of DETECTIVE COMICS. In this total of 11 different issues before Robin made his first appearence in #38, Batman underwent several changes.

Batman has appeared on the covers of all DETECTIVEs except #1-26,28,32,34 and of these he appeared in a 1 inch circle on #32 and 34. With DETECTIVE #27 being the first issue with Batman it might have been surprising to see the name of Robert Kane appearing along side of such an adventure strip. For this was the already established Bob Kane who was drawing Peter Pupp in JUMBO COMICS, among other 'comic' features. And to quote from BATMAN #1: "For some time Bob was a straight 'comic' artist, specializing in drawings of a humorous nature. When the trend swung toward the adventure type drawing, Bob was quick to see that therein lay his future, and though the abrupt change in drawing technique necessitated plenty of hard labor on his part, the phenomenal success of the Batman is proof enough that Bob was capable of making the transition."

Compared with the standards of today, Bob's first Batman adventure would have to be descibed as crude. Yet, even though Bob was doing a lot of experimenting during the next dozen issues, even #28 showed how quickly Bob was at adapting to the new style of 'adventure strips. The first Batman story had all the appearences of only a fair idea, but definitely something new, catchy, and worth trying out. "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate" ran only six pages and was not the usual origin-type story. Commissioner Gordon appeared in the very first panel so some sort of pattern was taking shap from the start.

In appearence, Batman was basically the same in 1939 as he is today. However, a closer scrutiny brings out the difference in his utility belt buckle. Instead of the regular square buckle, there is a round one with a small round knob in the middle of it. Batman's cape, instead of being soft and flowing, is stiff and juts out at an angle.

Story-wise the first Batman adventure isn't worth the space to describe. Art-wise it is evident Bob Kane is influenced by Milton Caniff in a couple of action panels. I also spotted other influences in several other Batman stories. This isn't hard to do when one has such a collection as mine, and it's fun to play "Comic Detective" and spot these likenesses by almost all artists. Believe me, even the artists of today are still copying Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON. Perhaps someday I'll get around to doing a 'spotter' type service for readers because this is one of the amazing parts of reading and collecting comics.

DETECTIVE COMICS #28 finds Bob Kane still signing his name; Rob't Kane, though this didn't last long. The title and all uses of the word, Batman is hyphenated and set in parenthesis. There is a lot of action in this 2nd story which concerns jewel thieves. Batman makes good use of his silken lasso for the first time. Again the story runs 6 pages. The 'ears' on Batman's cowl protrude most distinctively and are much larger than they are today. In one panel the utility belt is still round and in others it is square, the buckle that is. Always in the early days of Batman he was a fugitive from the law. It was a complicated way of life but our hero seemed to thrive on it. One of the usual gimmicks most all masked-crime-fighters used in the old days was the dangerous delivery of a captured crook at the front of police headquarters. A puzzled cop would come running out exclaiming: M "Kelly, did you see that?" as our hero roared away. There was the usual noted pinned to the crook's coat with an explanation plus the mark of the hero. Batman was no exception.

Bob Kane was still doing the one or two page 'comic' fillers or he could have had a back-log of such material. In #28 he has a 2/3 page of cartoons entitled "Jest a Second". In many old National (DC) titles of this period you'll find Bob Kane doing "Ginger Snap".

DETECTIVE #29 finds Batman jumping to ten big pages. This indicates he is catching on fast in popularity. If you compare this w with issue 27 you wouldn't believe it possible for Kane's art to develop so fast. His style in this issue shows neat definite lines. There is no longer a sketchy probing of experimentation. Now Bob knows what he wants and is doing it. Even Batman shows every sign of developing. Given a purpose in his new comic-life we find Batman referring to his unique utility belt. He inserts glass pellets of choking gas into the tubes that fit around the belt. He starts using the suction-cup gloves and additional cups around his knees which enable him to scale walls like a human fly.

It is in this issue, 29, that he meets his first 'name' villain, a bearded, monocled and dapper criminal called Doctor Death. The evil doctor has completed

his experiments which cause death by pollen extract. Using the threat of such a death he demands a tribute from the wealthy. Knowing he must eliminate the challenge of Batman, Dr. Death sets a trap for the legendary figure of the night. After a lot of the famous Batman-action, the caped crimebuster is shot for the first time, by Death's assistant, Jabah. Despite a should wound, he ejects a glass pellet which overcomes the giant indian, thus allowing Batman to escape. In the conclusion of the story, Dr. Death supposedly dies when his lab goes up in flames. Actually this is another of the patters which will be stereotyped in comics for years to come; for Death does not die and will return, more menacing than ever, in the next issue.

DETECTIVE COMICS #30 gives us another ten page Batman adventure as he continues his pursuit of Dr. Death and another assistant, this time it is Mikhail the Cossack. Again the plot concerns the threat of death if the victum does not pay the price. In the issues to date Batman continues to do a lot of roof-hopping and relies mainly ~~t~~ on gas pellets, but it isn't long before he moves into high gear.

The first Bat-plane is introduced in DETECTIVE #31 and due to its construction Batman calls it, "My Batgyro". As you might guess, it was quite a weird craft that drew cries from the populace below; "The end of the world. We are attacked by Martians!" It could be flown automatically when Batman wanted to climb down his rope ladder. This he did several times during his battle with the arch-criminal known as The Monk.

Issue 31 showed the beginning of the present logo although still not like that which was used in BATMAN #1 and other early issues. Another innovation worth noting in #31 was the first use of the Batarang, called then; The Flying Baterang. Both the Batgyro and Batarang got a good workout in this Monk adventure which started when Bruce Wayne's fiancee, Julie Madison, is prevented by Batman from harming her victum while under the hypnotic influence of The Monk. Julie is persuaded to take an ocean voyage, see Europe, and forget her troubles. But The Monk continues to terrorize the pretty young brunette. Batman has followed overhead and once more is able to break The Monk's spell over her. In this international adventure, which runs 10 pages, Batman is engaged in another of his lifelong escapes. Caught in a net, by The Monk, Batman is lowered down into a pit full of poisnoness snakes. Using his Batarang he is able to strike the lever which controls the descent of the net. The Batarang is also used to smash a chandelier. The falling glass is caught by M Batman and he cuts his way free. Like Dr. Death, The Monk makes his escape and once again we have a continued storied. As an added note to #31, in this story Batman is shown wearing longer gauntlets, but still no 'fins' on the back side of them.

Over the years I missed some of the issues of DETECTIVE COMICS and so when I began collecting with abandon in 1955 I was lucky enough to fill all the gaps in my now complete run of Batman adventures. One of the surprises I got from #31~~q~~ was the introduction of the Batarang, which is mentioned above. I was always under the impression that it was a modern idea rather than something which started so long ago. The reason for this is that after this short period the Batarang wasn't used much, if at all, for several years.

A vampire is supposed to be a corpse who comes to life at night and sucks the blood of people while they sleep. Knowing this, it is still shocking to see Batman shooting bullets from an automatic into the body of a human-appearing being. This all comes about in DETECTIVE COMICS #32. Batman has followed his financee, Julie, into Hungaria during the continuation of The Monk adventure. In a castle deep in the Carlathan Mountains, Batman gets tangled up with these vampires, werewolves, & what have you. At one point in the story, The Monk, who wears a red hood with a skull and crossbones on it, and a red robe, overcomes Batman with his hypnotic power and forces him into an arena full of wolves. Via a silken rope, gas capsules, and the reliable Batarang, Batman makes his escape. Realizing the only way to break The Monk's spell over Julie is to destroy The Monk. To do this Batman melts a silver statue, while The Monk sleeps, and forms silver bullets. Then, opening the tomb, he fires point-blank into the vampire corpse.... "Never again will you harm any mortal being!" exclaims the grim avenger. This allows life to return to Julie, but I never could get used to seeing Batman doing such a deed.

The cover of DETECTIVE COMICS #33 (November, 1939) is a true collectors item for this is THE cover where Batman wears a gun. Reminiscent of the Phantom's type holster, the Batman's extra gear adds greatly to the sweeping effect as he plummets down from a bridge into the open convertible of fleeing crooks. But besides the cover, the reader is finally given the origin story. The origin, which runs two pages, is the same one which is reprinted in BATMAN #1 (the only difference being a half-page splash panel.

With 7 issues of DETECTIVE, starring Batman, in print, we still have no mention of a Bat Cave. WWhen Bruce Wayne decides to become Batman, we see him bending over a large trunk and removing the blue and grey costume. Also he does make use of a sleek high-powered car but it is not a 'Batmobile' and in DETECTIVE #33 it is pictured red. By #35 the 'high-powered roadster' is a blue convertible. This new open-top car makes easy access for the springing leaps of our Batman when he gives chase to such early opponents as; Kruger, a Napoleon-type gang leader, Duc Deterre, a diabolical frenchman, and Sheldon Lenox, purveyor of pure ruby [illegible] While going through these early issues of DETECTIVE COMICS I kept

Dougan

wondering when the three 'fins' or 'tips' would start appearing on Batman's gauntlets and finally they turn up in #36 (Feb. 1940). They appear more like fish fins in this story, much unlike they look today. As in the case in most all early comics of the forties, there is never a mention of costume change. Gradually, Bob Kane is evolving his creation into a dynamic-looking crime-fighter. Primarily The Batman is a figure of the night as most all of his early adventures are concerned with crimes at night. This allows our artist to set familiar patterns of shading and a deft touch of black. Batman materializes from his blackness to strike fear into the hearts of hoodlums. Time and again Bob Kane uses favorite poses from one story to another. One such example is the overhead flip. He also uses the customary 'right cross' and 'stiff arm' to good use. More than once Batman will plunge through unopened windows amid a shower of broken glass. All this adds to the unmatched glamour of a dashing Batman. He recognizes no fear of the underworld and being a loner, it is quite evident he is a most dedicated pursuer of law and order.

Much is given to change in DETECTIVE #35 when Batman is faced with death by mustard-gas while locked in a dungeon. In this particular episode, he calls on his utility belt and one of the many vials it carries. It is apparent he must escape immediately or perish so as he reaches for a certain vial and slams the pellet against the wall he exclaims, "Hope I picked the right vial!" Luck was with him as the vial bursts open to mix with the gas rendering it harmless. It's hard to imagine the Batman of today taking such a risk. But then we must remember, he is a selfmade comics-character and was in the process of learning his profession the hard way.

Almost every artist of the day somehow always managed to use the old 'Flash Gordon' strip idea of falling down through a trap door into a pit below. DETECTIVE #35 finds Batman in just such a predicadement, even down to the same old metal pipe sticking out from the wall so he can catch ahold of it to stop his fall. If I may, I'd like to quote from a letter I received from Bob Kane. Quote: "Every artist needs an influence or stimulus to inspire his own progress when he starts out -- until the time he matures and developes his own individual style." It is particular gratifying to me that Bob Kane was apparently influenced by Caniff and Raymond, among other greats, for these two are the ones I admire most. So, in learning his new style of adventure-art, we find Bob Kane emerging with an unmatched style of his own that thrilled so many fans in the early forties. Most older collectors unamiously agree that The Batman of 1940-43 was Bob Kanes greatest work. To all serious collectors I urge you to try and obtain the Batman adventures of that period.

One of Batman's most unforgetable early-day villains was the bearded and bespectacled Prof. Hugo Strange, for this was the enemy who later commandered a gang of giants that to Batman's taking of a human life. When this bald-headed arch-criminal first crossed Batman's path in DETECTIVE COMICS #36 we find him to be considerably (by a philosophizing Bruce Wayne) the most dangerous man in the world. Scientist and a criminal genius are the attributes of the greatest organizer of crime in thw world.

Using the cover of his invented "fog", Professor Strange's men plunder the city at will. Batman becomes involved when he tries to save the life of an F.B.I. agent, or G-Man as they were so commonly called then, and as the agent dies in his arms Police arrive and assume FM is the killer. To assert his innocence Batman vows to bring Strange to justice. After twelve pages of action-packed adventure, Hugo Strange is added to the already impressive list of fallen Batman adversaries. The main importance to this story is the "shaping-up" of a type of criminal who will later become the greatest villain of the comics, The JOKER! As these early villains come and go it is evident that something really evil is lurking in the background of the bold, dark and thought provoking stories that had appeared up to this point. The day of the "super"-villain is right around the corner and Prof. Hugo Strange is an ample forerunner.

At the conclusion of the story appearing in Detective Comics #37 there is a 1-panel announcement of "next month's" Batman adventure. Batman is shown facing two "huge, terrifying MAN-MONSTERS!" And as the panel reads on, "(they) stalk the streets of a once peaceful metropolis, bringing to them havoc and destruction. Yet one man alone had the courage to oppose them. That man..the mighty BATMAN! --Americ's greatest adventure-mystery-action strip." Like many of the COMIC ODDITES that appears in this issue, this particular adventure did not show up "next month" but was instead delayed until BATMAN #1. In place of this advertised story the fans of April 1940 were presented with something new and exciting. Yes, it was that laughing young daredevil, ROBIN, The Boy Wonder. On the cover of #38 he was described as the "Sensational character-find of 1940", which truly he was! But that is another story, and except for the one story in BATMAN #1, the lone-wolf days of Batman were over. So it was with Detective #37 the "loner" Batman is shown on the cover with his patented"over the shoulder flip" of a hoodlum, which would soon be replaced with such "double" action shots of Robin kneeling behind the hoodlum and Batman pushing him backward. And in this "last" lone-adventure Batman makes the most of it as he swings, kicks, punches and frightens the hordes of the underworld. Like so many of the early stories there is no "title" to the adventure so its hard to refer to the "case of the..." like its possible to do now but each and every story is an unforgettable part of "the Batman Story" and remains so "stories" in my mind today as they did when I first read them many years ago. For

Batman, as a loner, with Robin, old or new, has always been and most certainly will remain the No. 1 adventure-strip in America.

"But out of the sky, spitting death...The Batman!" With this caption, like a vicious black vulture, the weird bat-winged Bat-Plane zoomed downward in a power-dive. The watercooled machine guns mounted just outside the cockpit echoed with the deadly staccato of "Rat-tat-tat-tat" and blazing bullets criss-crossed the full length of the speeding two ton truck.

A close-up view of the grim-faced pilot was startling. Taking deadly aim through the sights of the deadly weapon, was a blue and blacked masked man. Two long ears stood at the crown of the frightening hood. A long flowing cape tore out from his back and neck, flapping madly in the rushing night air.

The resonant voice spoke softly, but determinedly, "Much as I hate to take a human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary!" Again, the rapid fire: Rat-tat-tat-tat and death rushed out in red and yellow from the snout of the vibrating machine gun.

Batman had killed! Or had he?

Before we go further into this last great adventure of Batman before Robin, we should preview the circumstances leading up to this historical event in the life of Batman.

This particular story, which I call, "The Return of Hugo Strange" (no actual title was listed), is the second of four stories from BATMAN #1 (Spring, 1940). Originally this adventure was scheduled to appear in DETECTIVE COMICS #38 (April 1940), but Robin was introduced in that issue instead.

As describe by Bruce Wayne in DETECTIVE COMICS #36, "Professor Hugo Strange, the most dangerous man in the world! Scientist, philosopher and a criminal genius---Little is known of him, yet this man is undoubtedly the greatest organizer of crime in the world." This was the type of man Batman set out to capture after arriving to late to save the life of a dying G-man early in the story.

Unable to save the Federal Agent, who dies w in his arms, Batman is pursued by the police who, coming onto the scene, assumed the Cowled Crusader is the killer. To assert his innocence, Batman vows to bring Strange to justice.

Despite his usual skill in physical combat he suffers a few setbacks: "Suddenly a blackjack crashes down on the Batman's head." As two thugs pack off the fallen gladiator their ruffled buddy exclaims, "He's out! After wrecking a dozen men...That guy's T.N.T.--Wow! My jaw!"

Later, at the hideout of the Professor, the bearded, bald, bespectacled gang-leader, threatens, "I have brought you here alive, so that you may know what it means to interfere with Prof. Strange!" Batman endures the lashing of a black whip before his"steel muscles suddenly surge with strength and snap his bonds!"

After shattering a glass pellet of gas from his remarkable utility belt, he soon subdues Strange and gang. The final panel shows the Professor behind bars at the State Penitentiary. Shaking as he grips the bars he utters this boast, "They can't keep me here, caged like some wild beast! I'll escape...and when I do, I shall devote the rest of my life in revenging myself upon the Batman!"

Briefly, this is the prelude to Hugo's break out of prison which opens the BATMAN #1, last Batman (before Robin) story.

In the early days of this most exciting creation of Bob Kane we have a character that exudes realism. There are none of the aliens or fantasy-creatures (super apes, etc.). Instead, we have the back-alley hood, shadowy underworld characters capable of any crime. With their slitted eyes and sunken cheeks they strike out of the darkness to plunder, extort and murder. These are vicious calculating renegades against mankind. The Batman of this period is a highly trained and dedicated adversary to the success of their nefarious undertakings.

In reviewing the first eleven issues of DETECTIVE COMICS featuring Batman (#27-37) we have a Batman who: (From a rooftop) "grabs his second adversary in a deadly headlock...and with a mighty heave sends the burly criminal flying through space..."(to land two stories below on a cement walk); (As Batman flies through the air by his silken bat-rope--his feet arched foward like a battering ram) "But as Mikhail puts his head through the window...there is a sickening snap as the cossack's neck breaks under the mighty pressure of the Batman's foot." As Batman slides down the rope to the street he makes this sober statement, "First, Jabah, now you...and yet Doctor Death lives on!"; "The Count falls back toward the steel blade sticking through the closet door! A wild scream and the foriegn agent is impaled upon his own sword!" This latter example is an oft-used ending to more than three different stories. These incidents are cited here to illustrate the type of material being presented during comic book's infancy. So we have a Batman that is necessarily harsh in his dealings with the underworld. Had he been in the least lenient he would undoubtedly have met disaster early in his career.

Can you imagine coming out of your favorite theatre some evening, looking up at the brightly colored lights of your city and wondering whether to have a pizza before heading home? But as you looked up, there stood a giant terrifying man-monster peering madly down upon you? His out-stretched hands instantly telling you he was there to wreck havoc and destruction upon your world?

This was the splash panel opening to the last Batman solo adventure. Arch-criminal Professor Hugo Strange had escaped from prison and was free to carry out the next of his diabolical schemes.

Little did the populace of Gotham City realize the significance of Strange's first act of crime when he forced the release of 5 patients from the city insane asylum. In the home of Bruce Wayne (as he listens to the radio broadcast of the crime) the smoke rises lanquidly from his prevalent pipe. Prophetically, he says, "Criminals, maniacs, and Strange can only add up to one thing...something new in crime...something fantastic and terrible, very terrible!!"

It takes a month before Bruce is to learn just how terrible Strange's new scheme can be. Our scene is a crowed street in lower Manhattan, when suddenly a woman stops and screams in fright. Towering up a full 15 feet, a gigantic hulk looms menacingly above the shocked people. For no apparent reason, the monster inoredibly lifts a taxi cab loaded with passengers and slams it to the payment. As terrified Gothamites flee in panic, police swarm in with guns drawn. Their bullets thud into the chest of the beast which only maddens him. "Look! Bullets don't stop him...He's still living!" With enraged grunts the monster lifts two policemen, one in each hand, and throws them above the stricken people into a store window. He then rips up a lamp post and swings it like a scythe with terrible effect.

As reinforcements rush into the area the monster lumbers toward a truck idling nearby. A bomb, thrown by the monster, halts all pursuit.

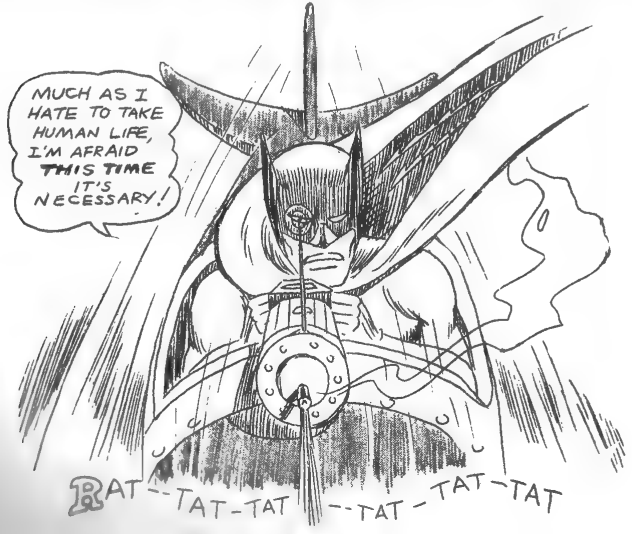
The following day the monster strikes again. This time he tears down the "El" as an overhead streetcar appears to be rushing to it's destruction. Again police in pursuit meet the same fate of a bomb.

But high above, a weird aircraft follows unseen. The Batman has entered the case. Soon: "Well it looks like the end of my search." As the truck pulls up to a barnlike structure on a barren hilltop next to the ocean front.

Despite the appearence of a trap, Batman accepts the challenge and enters the forbidding darkness of the building. Suddenly, lights flash on and Batman finds himself in the hands of two wild-eyed monsters. Then he is face to face with his most deadly enemy. "Ah!" exclaims Batman, "I expected to see your ugly face around here. I had a hunch you were behind this. We meet again Professor Strange!" With bull whip in hand Strange snarls, "Caught! And very neatly too!"

He explains with 'the greatest of pleasure' how he used the escaped lunatics and made them into monsters. A discovered extract speeded up their growth glands and when injected into a normal man the sudden growth not only distorts the body but also the brain. Wearing bullet proof clothing they are nearly unstopable. The next step is to send out two monsters as diversary action while Strange's men loot banks elsewhere.

Since Strange is an old enemy of Batman he knows full well the danger of the utility belt (known then only as a belt of gas capsules). Removing this, Strange has Batman held rigidly as he plunges the deadly needle deep into the Cowled Crusader's arm. "Done!" Strange gloats triumphantly, "Observe the clock, Batman! It is exactly 6 o'clock at night. The serum takes 18 hours to work. At precisely noon tomorrow the serum will take effect!" The last thing Batman hears



is Strange's maniacal laugh as a massive fist crashes against his jaw.

Hours later, a quarter to twelve noon, to be exact, Batman revives in time to hear fully the plans of Strange's set-up for the day. As the Proffesor's hirelings depart with two of the five monsters Batman realizes he has very little time to effect an escape from behind his iron barred prison. From his boot heels he mixes two chemicals and shortly after blasts his way out.

Professor Strange, who has remained behind, is surprised by Batmans escape and their ensuing battle carries them to an open window. A powerful blow from Batman's fist knocks the criminal through the window to fall to murky waters below. Pausing for a second, Batman reflects, "I wonder if this is really the end of Prof. Hugo Strange???" The water below thrashes for a moment--then grows still. "Time is flying--it must be almost time for the serum to work!" snaps Batman, "I've got to stop it!" But as he turns, the legendary Batman suddenly faces a new and greater peril. LA door opens and three monsters stalk toward him. Spying a long pole used to open the skylight Batman avoids the protecting bullet-proof clothing and jabs the first monster between the eyes. In sensational action scenes that long ago made him so famous, Batman catches the hook above himself and swings across the room and bowls into the monsters but the deadly serum is in his veins--which is dangerously nearing the time when it will turn himself into a monster.

Jabbing the hook between a charging monster's legs this causes the goliaths to collide. This immediately enrages them and they stare at each other with hate in their eyes. In a scene out of a Frankenstein thriller the shadows of the two monsters rage in horrible battle in back of Batman as his scientific training learned in college is put to the supreme test. Using Strange's lab, Batman creates a compound that will act as an antidote to stop the excess action from the growth glands. "There! It's in! I've beaten Hugo Strange by a single minute!

Taking his utility belt Batman observes the monsters have killed each other--but two still live and must be stopped. Knowing the plan of the gang, Batman in the Batplane heads for the Post Road first.

It is at this point we see the ominous Batplane zooming downward; the machine-gun chattering; Batman's teeth bared by the rushing wind. "Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid this time it's necessary!"

As the truck below swerves out of control, its top crissed-crossed with bullet holes, it crashes into a tree. Has the driver and his companion perished It appears so but it is actually unconfirmed.

Perhaps we could give Batman a reprieve here--but as the monster, riding in the rear of the truck, comes plummeting out he rises to find a steel-like rope looping over his neck. It extends upward to a rising Batplane which jerks him from the ground. In a closeup scene, the giant fights helplessly against the ever-tightening rope.

As the huge body grows limp, Batman accepts the cruel judgement he hass assessed. "He's probably better off this way." Here too, we could assume that he, even though a tragic monster, could still retain a small thread of life. This would allow us to still say: Batman has not taken a human life. But, alas, with the tree tops looming far, far below Batman takes a knife and slices it into rope. "Now to cut this fellow down and then go to Daly Ave...for the last monster!"

Again, this time on Daly Ave., the Batplane's machine-guns rip into truck number two. As it spins off into a downtown building, the surviving monster gazes up at the circling Batplane. He seems to realize it meant to harm him. He must get up to do battle. The crazed beast, seeing the building rear high in the sky, thinks he can reach the annoying plane that way. The insane monster starts to climb the tower. Up...up he climbs...and finally the top!

Like the famous old KING KONG movie thriller the befuddled monster shakes his fists violently at the circling, buzzing air plane that always manages to stay just out of his reach. How to get at this fitful thing? As the bullet-proof clothing stops the bullets from the Batplane's deadly guns, Batman dives in with gas pellets. As they break open at the monster's feet, the great goliath's eyes glaze over. With a last gasp the shaggy hands raise in final defiance. He stumbles and topples off the tower to his doom.

With the demise of the monsters and the creator, Prof. Hugo Strange (for he never returned), the end of an era had come. Batman would soon have a young, dashing partner in his perilous world of crime-fighting, but then, that is another story.

MONGO MANIA
by
Martin L. Greim

To attempt to write an article on Flash Gordon in this limited space, would not do justice to the hero; so instead I'll give you a rundown on some of Mongo's more notable characters.

FLASH GORDON - Yale graduate and world renowned athelete, who journeyed to the planet Mongo, when the world thought it was going to collide with Earth. On Mongo, Flash faced many dangers and finally freed the planet from a tyrant's domination.

DALE ARDEN - Flash's sweetheart. She was a passenger on the transcontinental plane that crashed near the observatory of the scientist who was to take them to Mongo. All through Flash's adventures, she was by his side sharing in the action.

DR. HANS ZARKOV - The brilliant scientist who rocketed, with Flash and Dale, to Mongo in a space ship of his own design. His scientific knowledge and courage helped Flash many times in his battle to free Mongo.

MING the MERCILESS - Self-proclaimed emperor of Mongo. This tyrant tried to imprison and kill Flash and his friends many times, until Flash finally defeated him and returned Mongo's rightful ruler to the throne.

QUEEN AURA - Queen of Arboria, Ming's daughter and wife of Mongo's rightful ruler. Beautiful and brilliant, she loathed all that her father stood for.

KING BARIN - Rightful heir to the throne of Mongo; who ruled the kingdom of Arboria, until Flash Gordon restored him to the throne of Mongo.

KING VULTAN - Ruler of the Hawkmen. In one of Flash's early battles, Dr. Zarkov saved the Hawkmen's flying city from devastation and earned the respect of Vultan and his people.

RONAL - Blood relative of King Barin and husband of the ruler of Frigia. He first met the Queen when he accompanied Flash Gordon to this frozen land.

QUEEN FRIA - Ruler of the frozen northland of Frigia. At first she loved Flash Gordon, but later she fell in love with and married Ronal.

[illegible] - The leader of the Power Men, Mongo's engineers and [illegible] men who opposed [illegible]

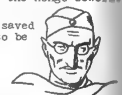
A SALUTE TO:

ALEX RAYMOND,

AL WILLIAMSON AND

THE STAFF OF KING COMICS

COUNT BULOK - One of the leaders of Mongo's outlaws, whose hideout was in the Mongo sewers.



DR. BONO - The doctor who saved Flash's life when he was to be executed by Ming.

QUEEN UNDINA - Ruler of Coralia, Mongo's undersea kingdom. She saved Flash from drowning, by making him a water breather for a time.

AZURA - The Witch Queen. She put Flash under her power by way of a drug; but he came to his senses and forced her to take her own drug, after she mistreated Dale.

QUEEN DESIRA - Ruler of Tropica. Flash Gordon with the help of mountain raiders, restored her to the throne after it had been taken over by a tyrant.

GUNDAR - Leader of the mountain raiders who became Queen Desira's husband.

Written and Drawn by
Martin L. Greim

(Mongo Mania) #2

THE DAY FLASH GORDON DIED!

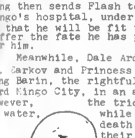
Alex Raymond was, as well as being a tremendous artist, an inspired story teller. His Flash Gordon strip was one of the most imaginative and exciting series ever written. When reading his stories, you seem to become part of them; to be drawn up into the action, so to speak.

In 1933, "Perils of Mongo" was released, in a Whitman Big Little Book. In this book, one of the most exciting of the Flash Gordon sequences was told: Flings public execution of Flash Gordon.

Up to the time of this story, Flash Gordon had been clenched in a do or die struggle with King the Merciless; each trying to break each others might. Finally King's forces succeed in routing Flash's men and Flash is dragged to Ming, by Captain Grombo's Desert Legion. However exhaustion and exposure to the desert sun have taken their toll and Flash lies near death.

King is enraged at Captain Grombo, for bringing Flash to him in this condition. Angered at the thought of Flash dieing before he can extract revenge on him, King reduces Grombo to the ranks, has him flogged and sentances him to six months hard labor. King then sends Flash to Mongo's hospital, under guard; so that he will be fit to suffer the fate he has planned for him.

Meanwhile, Dale Arden, Dr. Zarkov and Princess Aura (Ming's daughter, now married to King Barin, the rightful heir to the throne of Mongo,) head toward Kingo City, in an attempt to save Flash from being executed. However, the trio has a faulty map and they soon run out of water, while crossing the Mongo Desert. As they face death from thirst, some desert outlaws come to their aid and escort them to the outskirts of Mingo City.



By this time, Flash is feeling better and is getting to know his doctor, Doctor Bono. Ming is also getting to know the doctor. He makes frequent visits to the hospital, anxious to extract his vengeance as soon as possible. Bono, though respectful to King, feels sorry for Flash and tells King Flash's recovery is taking time. In reality, though, Flash is almost himself again.

Now the action begins. One day, while Flash is under a recovery ray, his guard carelessly allows his rifle to come too near to the huge million-volt electrodes of the thermo-ray and a sheet of blue flame envelopes him. Doctor Bono, too, is affected by the accident. He falls backward, landing on a heavily charged coil, plunging the hospital into darkness. Flash is now able to escape, but his better instincts make him pause, and using a rubber floor mat as an insulatcr, he scoops Doctor Bono off the charged wire. Leaving Bono in safety, Flash then flees through the corridors of the darkened hospital. However, Flash has waited too long; before he can make his escape, he is engaged by King's guards and after a furious battle, he's recaptured.

I should note here, that Alex Raymond's draftsman's art was really begining to show. It was clean, with backgrounds at their peak. Alex Raymond's art was coming of age.

While Flash was battling in the hospital, Dale, Zarkov and Aura have befriended a local farmer and his wife. With their help, the trio enters Kingo City and Aura goes to King to plead for Flash's life. King, enraged at his daughters plea, sends her back to her husband, Barin, in his kingdom of Arboria. Dale, Arkov and the farmer Luco discuise themselves and with a few of Luco's friends, try to rescue Flash. They almost make it, until deadly rays, from small jets end their attempt. Only Dale, Zarkov, and Luco escape. The three manage to break into an armory and steal an armored car and uniforms, while outside the slow march of death begins for Flash. The throne that lines the way is strangely silent, for if Flash dies, so does their only hope for freedom.

Raymond's suspenseful scripting of the story was beginning to build. Time was running out for Flash Gordon.

With the armored car, stolen from the armory, Arkov pulls boldly into the middle of the procession. He tells Flash's guards that King has ordered them to ride in the armored car. The whole plan is ruined when, the Captain of the guard asks for orders and Luc pulls a ray gun. His rashness gives away the desperate scheme and they have to flee for their lives.

Suspense was at its peak. Flash Gordon took a deep breath and mounted the steps to his doom. In the public execution chamber Ming, the executioner, and Doctor Bono waited. Once inside the glassoid walls, the door is sealed and Flash is strapped to an electric chair. At this moment, Doctor Bono pretends to adjust Flash's head-piece and slips a pill into Flash's mouth.

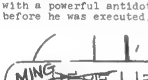
A murmur of sympathy, for Flash, rolls over the crowd as King throws the switch. Disguised, in the audience, Dale collapses into Zarkov's arms. Inside the chamber Doctor Bono stops King; telling him the first shock killed Flash. King examines Flash and orders his body carried out to the tomb he has prepared.

Characters pictured in this story are:

Flash Gordon
Ming
Doctor Bono

Yes friends, a comic first. A hero, publicly executed by a villain. Not quite though.

Later, the following evening, a furtive figure enters Flash Gordon's tomb. It's Doctor Bono and he injects Flash with a powerful antidote. It seems the pill Flash had taken, before he was executed, put him into a coma. Then Doctor Bono stoped King, before Flash had received the full shock, and allowed King to think Flash dead.



It was at this point, Raymond showed some real scripting instinct. Ming had inscribed on the tomb, "Here Lies Flash Gordon"; altering King's inscription, with black paint. Flash left the following message. "Ming Lies! --Flash Gordon". Flash was later reunited with Dale and Zarkov for a happy ending.

This is but a portion of "Perils of Mongo", but I think it typifies the suspense and action Alex Raymond put into his stories. There have been many who have tried to imitate his style, but all to naught. Perhaps, though, Al Williamson has come the closest to the Raymond magnitude. His three Flash Gordon books, for King, are a proud addition to any Raymond collection. It's a shame he isn't doing any more today. It would be a great furtherance to the Flash Gordon legend.

The End.

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(Mongo Mania #3.)

Mongo's Forest Kingdom

On the planet Mongo there are many races and cultures. These races range from primeval to super scientific. The region where both are most abundant is Mongo's Forest Kingdom. The forest itself abounds with great, carnivorous plants and huge, man-eating animals. Death lurks on every side. This is the part of the forest kingdom that Flash Gordon was first introduced. His rocket had been shot down by Ming's air patrol and he, Dale and Dr. Zarkov were forced to flee into this primeval world. Flash fought and overcame many forest menaces and finally became leader of the forest's Tusk Men; a group of savage warriors, who at first tried to capture him and

However, I wish most to deal with the part of the forest kingdom that is above all this. Four hundred feet above this, to be exact. The only safety from the forest menaces lay in the trees. Using a vine-elevator, Flash and company were lifted to the very tops of the trees and to the kingdom proper. Here they were confronted by a great broad highway and the snow-white palace of Barin the forest king. Barin, by the way, was the rightful ruler of Mongo and whose throne was now occupied by the tyrant Ming. Barin was given the forest kingdom, when he and Flash were the winners of the Tornements of Mongo. He then proceeded to build huge highways in the tree tops and a palace of most regal splendor. This land above the forest was known as Arboria. But even here, two cultures clashed. For in these trees also lived the Horned Apes. These beasts hated the tree men and tried time after time to destroy them. The apes were finally defeated, when Flash Gordon and Barin's tree men tricked them onto a vine bridge and cut both ends, dropping them thousands of feet to the ground below.

Another beast that menaced the kingdom of Arboria was the Harpy Bats. These were huge flying creatures that could carry a man off with ease. The tree men always had to be on their guard against them.

In "The Forest Kingdom", Alex Raymond's art began to take on the look of a draftsman. The utilization of both the primitive and the highly civilized was brought out to its fullest. I believe, of all the places Raymond created in his Mongo series, Arboria is the most picturesque.

(Bongo Mania #4.) Copyright King Features Syndicate Inc.

City in the Sky

Of all the many kingdoms, on the planet Mongo, the fantastic aerial city of the Hawkmen is, in my opinion, the most unique.

This city was suspended in the air, over the magnetic mountains, by powerful rays controled from deep within the city. This sky city was peopled by beings with wings and ruled over by King Vultan. It is surprising how many early D.C. Hawkman stories contained swipes from the Alex Raymond Hawkmen series. Of all the ideas Raymond created, Sky City is the most original and unique.

Flash Gordon was first introduced to this kingdom, when he, Dale Arden, Dr. Zarkov, Prince Barin and Tun, of the Lion Men, were captured by the winged warlors of this city in the sky. They were brought before king Vultan who impressed them into slavery and kept Dale Arden as part of his harem. However, Flash would not be kept a slave and after many battles, in the aerial kingdom, he succeeded in freeing Dale and his friends; and earning the respect of King Vultan and his people.

This came about when Flash rescued Dale from Vultan, who was making advances towards her. They managed to elude the pursuing Hawkmen by climbing down a makeshift rope to an apartment just below them. But their freedom was short-lived, for after climbing through a window, they were quickly surrounded by Hawkmen guards. Flash attacked, but was quickly overpow and put before a firing squad. Just as he was to be shot, the city lurched to one side and buildings began to crumble around them. Something had gone wrong with the support ray machines, that held the city aloft. At this point Dr. Zarkov and Prince Barin came on the scene. Zarkov thought he could repair the damaged machines and after Flash had been pardoned for their release, he proceeded to do so.

Afterwards, King Vultan and his people became allies of Flash in his battle to overthrow Ming the Merciless.

The whole [illegible] related in the [illegible]

Empress of Mongo

(Mongo Mania #5)

Art and Article by Martin L. Greim

For a short time, in the reign of Ming the Merciless, he had an Empress rule at his side. This all came about, when Ming and a party of his elite guards were burying a contender to his throne on Mongo's island of Tombs. As Ming and his guards returned to the royal barge, they were attacked by Flash Gordon and his freemen, who were taking refuge on the island. After a fierce battle Flash overcame Ming and took him prisoner. Now, at last, Mongo had a chance to be free. Ming was put in a cell, while Flash met with his generals to make terms for freeing Mongo.

While back at Ming's cell a traitorous girl named Sonja had wormed her way past Ming's guard to give Ming a proposition. "I hate Flash Gordon!" Sonja told Ming. "If you make me your Empress, I'll help you escape." Ming agreed and seconds later Sonja had knifed Ming's guard and freed him. Ming and Sonja then made good their escape on a launch and returned to Mingo City. Flash Gordon and his men, after finding that Ming had escaped, quickly left their island hide-out. Flash knew it would only be a short time before Ming's army would be sent against them.

Meanwhile true to his word, Ming rewarded Sonja's treachery by marrying her and crowning her Empress of all Mongo. Ming then rose from his throne and gave a command. "I've kept my promise to make her Empress. Now take the rebel girl to the dungeons and execute her at once!" And so, such was the reward for the treacherous "Empress of Mongo". The ceremony was over. Ming strode down echoing hallways to his study. The great palace chimes started a mournful tolling. "Ha, the bells!" A sneer twisted on Ming's lips. "The Empress is dead! Would it were Flash Gordon instead!"

Ming and Sonja

MLG '69

(Copyright... King Features)

MONGO MANIA #6.

KANG

Art and Article by MARTIN L. GREIM

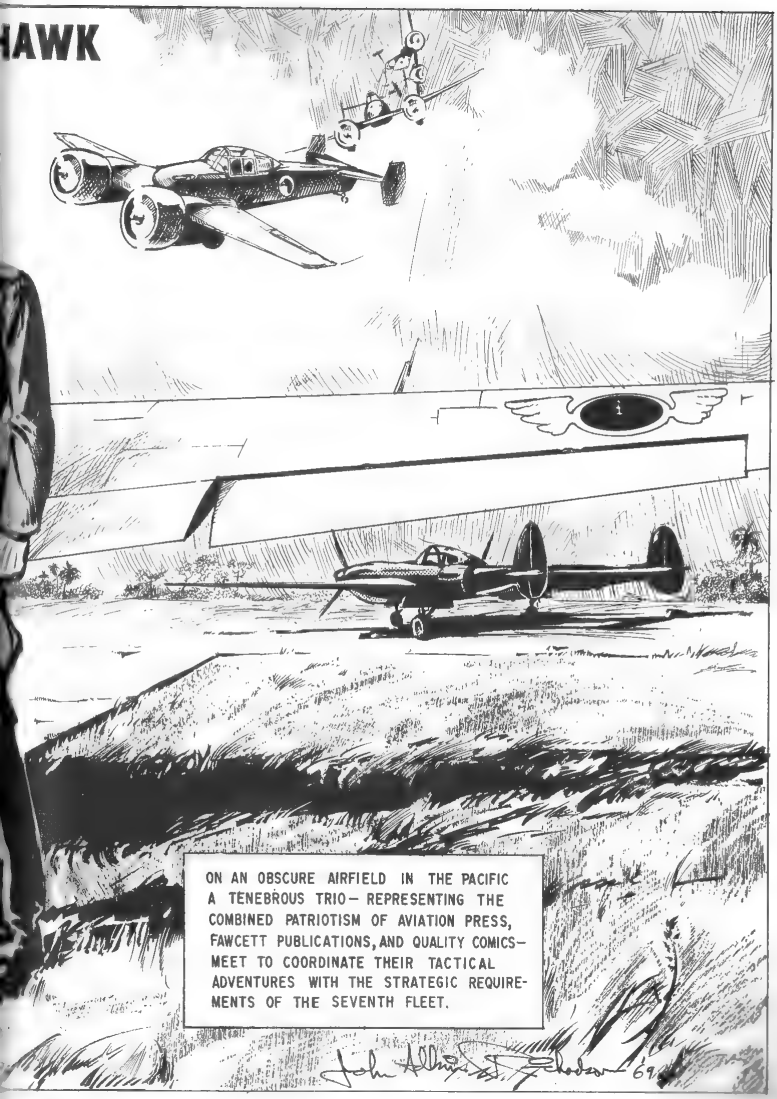
Long after FLASH GORDON overthrew Mongo's tyrant MING, another evil pretender to Mongo's throne appeared. His name...KANG the CRUEL. Kang tried to take over Mongo by gaining control of its Atom power. Flash foiled this plot and drove Kang into the wastelands of Mongo. There Kang became the wizard king of the Fur-Men. Flash followed him, but once again Kang eluded him and almost killed him by firing an atom charge into the Fur-Men's village - destroying it. Flash came to grips with Kang again, in Kang's undersea fortress. There he, Dale Arden and Tsohno (Kang's chief scientist) managed to destroy the city by causing stores of "Mongonium" to blow up in a tremendous atomic explosion, after they had rocketed through the fortresses sea dome. Finally, the strain of defeat, drove Kang out of his mind. A fitting end for an evil tyrant.

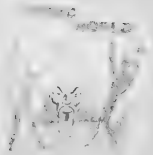
The art, for the most part, was not by Alex Raymond, but rather by Austin Briggs. Briggs was born in 1909 near Humbolt, Minn. He has had many imitators, but has kept his work fresh and contemporary. He grew up in Detroit and began illustrating for newspapers. After a few years, he came to New York and worked for Collier's Magazine and other slick magazines. During the Depression he did a variety of work from movie posters to "Flash Gordon". Briggs worked on Flash Gordon daily strips, and when Alex Raymond was drafted in 1944, he took over the Sunday strips as well. Since then, he's worked on Blue Book, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Saturday Evening Post, Life and Look. Austin Briggs is now on the Famous Artists staff.

MLG '69

FLASH GORDON

BLACK VENUS, CAPT. MIDNIGHT, &


HAWK
ON AN OBSCURE AIRFIELD IN THE PACIFIC A TENEBROUS TRIO— REPRESENTING THE COMBINED PATRIOTISM OF AVIATION PRESS, FAWCETT PUBLICATIONS, AND QUALITY COMICS— MEET TO COORDINATE THEIR TACTICAL ADVENTURES WITH THE STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE SEVENTH FLEET.



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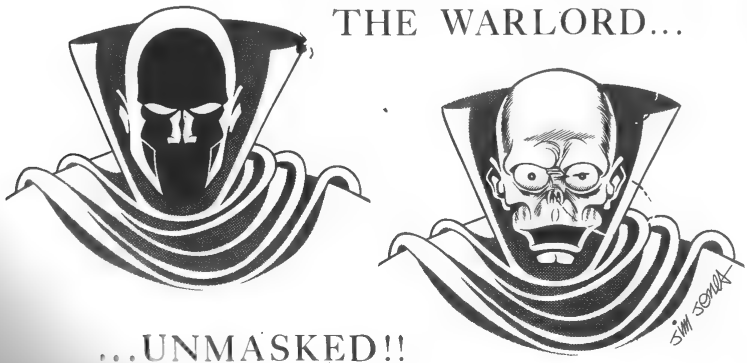

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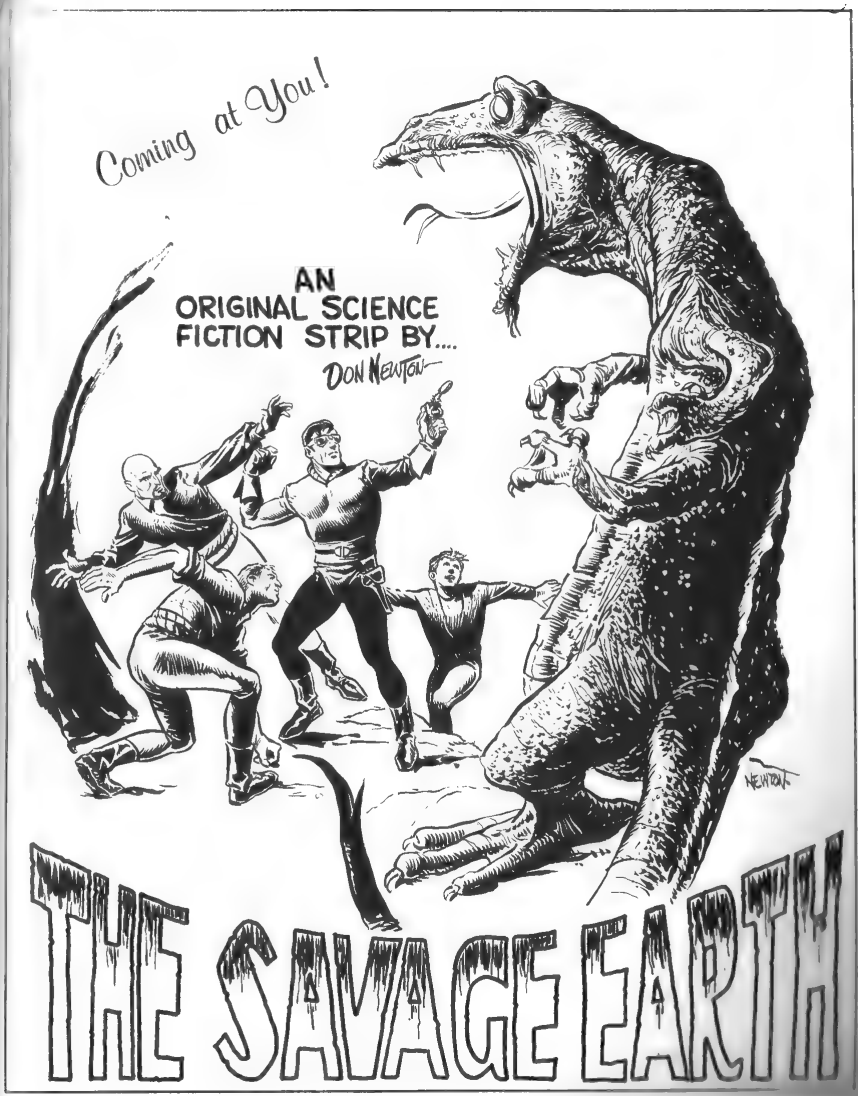

Coming at You!
AN
ORIGINAL SCIENCE
FICTION STRIP BY....
DON NEWTON
THE SAVAGE EARTH

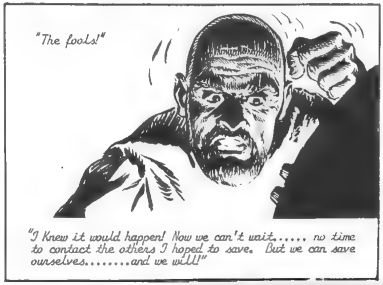
In 2032, the nuclear treaty between the United States and Jurassa, outlawed not only nuclear weapons but also many others designed for mass destruction. Thus any war that might come, would be on a limited basis. And in 2047 the war came, yet for a year both observed the treaty.

But as death and destruction mounted it was only a matter of time till one or the other violated the agreement and resorted to the dread "Cosmic Missile."

Realizing man's pending destruction, Dr. Dexter Argon works in his secret mountain lab perfecting his experiments in suspended animation. Through his genius he plans to save himself and a handful of others from nuclear doomsday!

Suddenly.....

"Dr. Argon! emergency warning just came.....Jurassia is launching cosmic missiles against us! Pellinia was wiped out ...thirty million people dead!"


"The fools!"
"I knew it would happen! Now we can't wait..... no time to contact the others I hoped to save. But we can save ourselves.....and we will!"

"Kirk, every second counts; get my son, check the air locks, lower the solar energy tower to the safety level, I'll prepare the suspended animation tubes..... hurry!"
Kirk! coming at ... over the mountain!"
...ssue: final

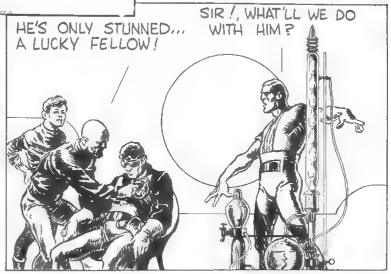
the Savage Earth

©1968

@chapter 2 "THE FINAL FURY"

THE STORY

THE "LIMITED" WAR BETWEEN EURASIA AND THE U.S.A. ERUPTS INTO NUCLEAR FURY AND THE FATE OF CIVILIZATION HANGS BY A THREAD. QUICKLY DR. DEXTER ARGON PREPARES TO PLACE HIMSELF, HIS SON AND LAB ASSISTANT INTO SUSPENDED ANIMATION UNTIL THE RADIATION HAS ABATED. PAUL AND KIRK HURRY OUTSIDE TO LOWER THE SOLAR ENERGY TOWER SO THAT VIBRATION WILL NOT SHATTER IT..... AS THEY ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN PAUL GLANCES TO THE SOUTH AND IS STARTLED TO SEE .....



THERE IS NO CHOICE! WE CAN PUT HIM OUTSIDE TO DIE OF RADIATION... LET HIM SIT HERE TO SUFFOCATE WITH THE AIR LOCKED OFF; OR GAMBLE WITH US!.... HE **GOES**...WE ALL GO....**NOW!**

SAVAGE EARTH

Chp 3 "TOMBS OF SURVIVAL"

WITHIN MINUTES THE COSMIC WAR ENDED AND A RAVISHED EARTH FELL SILENT, STRANGLED BY A SHROUD OF RADIATION. A YEAR, TEN, A HUNDRED, FIVE HUNDRED AND FINALLY A TIMER SETS TO LIFE THE CRYPT WHERE 4 HUMANS SLEEP.

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE LAB, DR. ARGON OPENS THE OTHER CHAMBERS. QUESTIONS FILL THE AIR AS VIRK, PAUL AND ALAN FREEZE, THE SKY RANG... VERGE AND REGAIN THEIR COMPOSURE.

THROUGH THE HAUNTING EMERALD GLOW A LONE FIGURE TUMBLES FROM HIS CAPSULE, GASPING FOR BREATH, HE CLUTCHES THE AIR LOCK AND WRESTS IT OPEN.

MOMENTS LATER DR. ARGON FORCES OPEN A RUSTED TRAP DOOR AND STEPS INTO THE BLAZING SUNLIGHT.

"GOOD LORD! EVERY THING LOOKS SO JUNGLE!"

ARGON "HOLDS" THE FLOOR... "WE HAVE SLEPT FOR 500 YEARS; FAR PAST THE DANGER OF RADIATION." "THE PLANET WE "LEFT" SO LONG AGO WILL BE MUCH CHANGED... WHO CAN SAY WHAT LIES BEYOND THE JUNGLE THAT SURROUNDS US?"

FREEZE LISTENS IN STUNNED SILENCE. HIS LAST RECOLLECTIONS WERE OF THE EURASIAN AERIAL ATTACK. "BUT YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS BEST," HE SAYS. "IM GRATEFUL TO YOU ALL!"

"WHAT KIND OF WORLD IS OUT THERE... IS ANYONE ALIVE?"

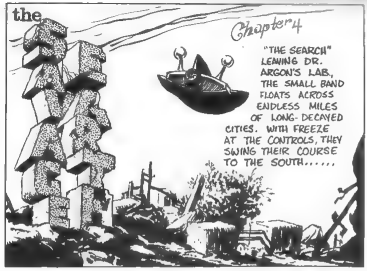
WEARILY

RIGHT NOW I CANT SAY... IVE BEEN SENDING OUT UNIVERSAL TELEVISOR WAVES... BUT SO FAR NOTHING!"

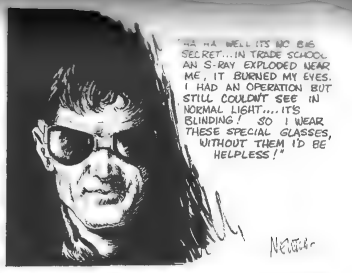
WE HAVE TO FIND WHAT'S OUT THERE," THIS THEY ALL AGREED. WITHIN HOURS DR. ARGON'S SOLOR ROCKET WAS WELL STOCKED AND A HUGE PANEL RUMBLED OPEN ON THE CLIFF SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN.

THE GLEAMING ROCKET EMERGES FROM THE YAWNING CAVERN AND FOR A MOMENT HANGS MOTIONLESS ABOVE THE STEAMING JUNGLE. THEN SILENTLY ACCELERATES TO VANISH WITHIN SECONDS ON THE HORIZON.

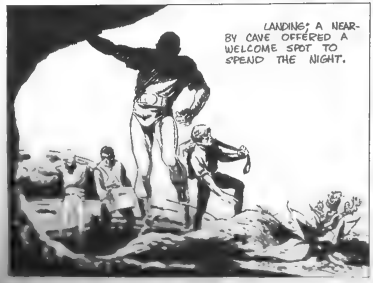
NEXT: "THE SEARCH"


the
Chapter 4
"THE SEARCH" LEWING DR. ARGON'S LAB, THE SMALL BAND FLOATS ACROSS ENDLESS MILES OF LONG-DECAYED CITIES. WITH FREEZE AT THE CONTROLS, THEY SWING THEIR COURSE TO THE SOUTH.....

"ALAN.... NOW THAT WE'RE FRIENDS, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THOSE FUNNY GOGGLES YOU WEAR... DON'T YOU EVER TAKE 'EM OFF?"


HA HA WELL IT'S NO BIG SECRET... IN TRADE SCHOOL AN X-RAY EXPLODED NEAR ME, IT BURNED MY EYES. I HAD AN OPERATION BUT STILL COULDN'T SEE IN NORMAL LIGHT... IT'S BLINDING! SO I WEAR THESE SPECIAL GLASSES, WITHOUT THEM I'D BE HELPLESS!"

ARGON COMES FORWARD... "ALAN, IT'S NEAR DARK. LETS LAND UP AHEAD FOR THE NIGHT!"


LANDING; A NEARBY CAVE OFFERED A WELCOME SPOT TO SPEND THE NIGHT.

NEXT;
"CAVERNS OF THE INFERNOS"

The SAVAGE EARTH

CHAP. 5 "CAVERNS OF THE INFERNOCS"

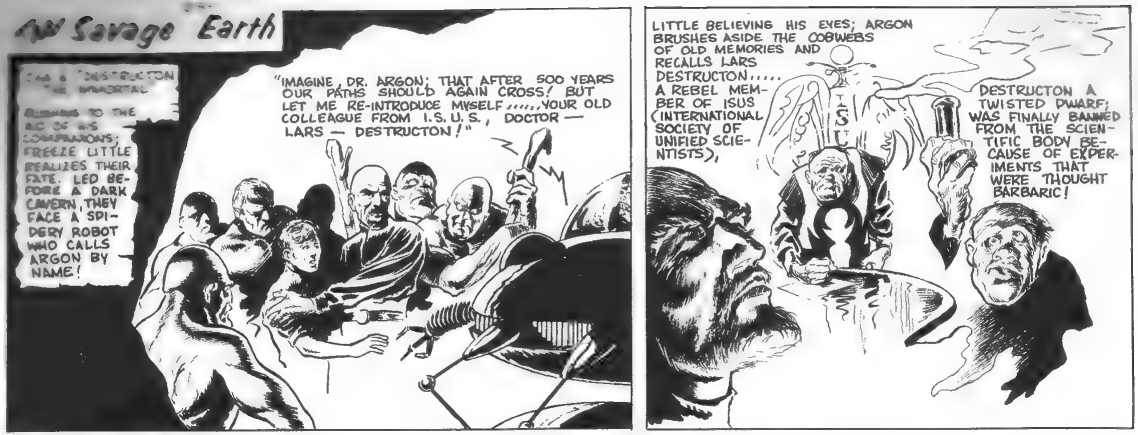
THROUGH A LABYRINTH OF TORCH LIT CAVERNS THE CAPTIVES ARE LED; DEEP INTO THE EARTH ALONG NARROW CAT-WALKS THAT SPAN BOILING WATERS BELOW.
"ALAN!," WHISPERS ARGON, "HE ISN'T WITH US!....."
"WHEN THEY JUMPED US HE WAS THERE....THEN?," RETURNS KIRK.

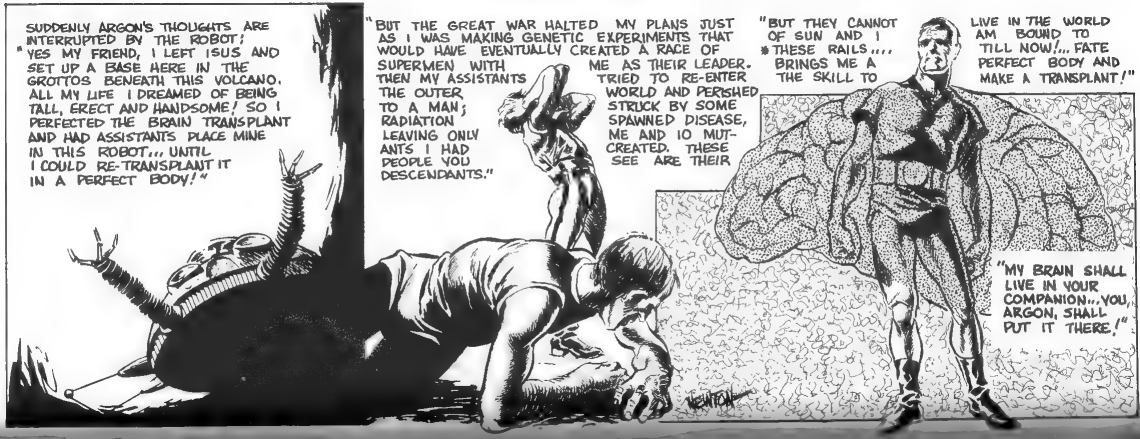
THE GUARD STROKES THE GONG AND ITS VIBRATIONS MESH WITH THE HUMMING OF THE STRANGE RAILING .....
LOUDER AND LOUDER .... THEN "IT" EMERGES FROM THE CAVERN!
ARGON, KIRK & PAUL STAND TRANS-FIXED .... UNBELIEVING!

IS IT TRULY YOU DR. ARGON? SO YOUR RESEARCH WAS A SUCCESS; AS YOU CAN SEE, SO WAS MINE!.... BUT PERHAPS YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE YOUR OLD COLLEAGUE I HAVE CHANGED A BIT...HA, HA!

But...
WHERE IS FREEZE? DURING THE WILD FRACUS HE HAD MANAGED TO SLIP INTO A DARK CREVICE IN THE ROCKS. NOW HE STEALS BACK TO CAMP FOR HIS PISTOL.
ONLY MINUTES BEHIND NOW TO EVEN THIS BALL GAME!
SUDDENLY, A WATCHFUL SENTRY STEPS FROM THE SHADOWS!
ONE MORE BLOW COULD SEND FREEZE PLUNGING INTO THE STEAMING POOLS BELOW.... BUT IN AN INSTANT, HIS PISTOL FLASHES DEATH!
GOT TO BE MORE CAREFUL..... I MAY BE THE ONLY HOPE THE OTHERS HAVE!
NEXT: DESTRUCTION; THE IMMORTAL BRAIN!"

My Savage Earth


AND A "DESTRUCTON" "HE IMMORTAL
RUSHING TO THE AID OF HIS COMPANIONS; FREEZE LITTLE REALIZES THEIR FATE. LED BE-FORE A DARK CAVERN, THEY FACE A SPI-DERY ROBOT WHO CALLS ARGON BY NAME!
"IMAGINE, DR. ARGON; THAT AFTER 500 YEARS OUR PATHS SHOULD AGAIN CROSS! BUT LET ME RE-INTRODUCE MYSELF.....YOUR OLD COLLEAGUE FROM I.S.U.S., DOCTOR — LARS — DESTRUCTON!"
LITTLE BELIEVING HIS EYES; ARGON BRUSHES ASIDE THE COBWEBS OF OLD MEMORIES AND RECALLS LARS DESTRUCTON..... A REBEL MEM-BER OF ISUS (INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF UNIFIED SCIE-NTISTS),
DESTRUCTON A TWISTED DWARF; WAS FINALLY BANNED FROM THE SCIEN-TIFIC BODY BE-CAUSE OF EXPER-IMENTS THAT WERE THOUGHT BARBARIC!


SUDDENLY ARGON'S THOUGHTS ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE ROBOT!
"YES MY FRIEND, I LEFT ISUS AND SET UP A BASE HERE IN THE GROTTOS BENEATH THIS VOLCANO. ALL MY LIFE I DREAMED OF BEING TALL, ERECT AND HANDSOME! SO I PERFECTED THE BRAIN TRANSPLANT AND HAD ASSISTANTS PLACE MINE IN THIS ROBOT... UNTIL I COULD RE-TRANSPLANT IT IN A PERFECT BODY!"
"BUT THE GREAT WAR HALTED MY PLANS JUST AS I WAS MAKING GENETIC EXPERIMENTS THAT WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY CREATED A RACE OF SUPERMEN WITH ME AS THEIR LEADER. THEN MY ASSISTANTS TRIED TO RE-ENTER THE OUTER WORLD AND PERISHED TO A MAN; STRUCK BY SOME RADIATION SPAWNED DISEASE, LEAVING ONLY ME AND 10 MUT-ANTS I HAD CREATED. THESE PEOPLE YOU SEE ARE THEIR DESCENDANTS."
"BUT THEY CANNOT LIVE IN THE WORLD OF SUN AND I AM BOUND TO * THESE RAILS.... TILL NOW!... FATE BRINGS ME A PERFECT BODY AND THE SKILL TO MAKE A TRANSPLANT!"
"MY BRAIN SHALL LIVE IN YOUR COMPANION... YOU, ARGON, SHALL PUT IT THERE!"
KEATON

"YOU DEVIL! I'D NEVER AGREE TO SUCH AN OPERATION!"
"YOU WILL DO IT, ARGON..... OR YOUR SON'S LIFE IS FORFEIT! TAKE THEM AWAY TO SEPARATE AREAS AND CAGE THEM! DOCTOR, YOU WILL BE GIVEN MY NOTES ON BRAIN TRANSPLANT TO STUDY.....TOMORROW WE OPERATE!"
BUT FROM THE DARKNESS, FREEZE WATCHES. AS ARGON IS LED AWAY, HE CAUTIOUSLY FOLLOWS.
LIKE A COBRA, HE STRIKES DOWN THE LONE GUARD!
"ALAN!"
NEXT....."A DESPERATE PLAN"

SAVAGE EARTH
THE BARS OF ARGON'S CELL CINDER BEFORE A BLAST FROM FREEZE'S PISTOL.
Cha. 7
"A DESPERATE PLAN"
I BROUGHT YOUR PISTOL, I THOUGHT IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY! WELL, LET'S GET KIRK AND PAUL AND CLEAR OUT OF HERE BEFORE SOMEONE COMES UP SHORT A BRAIN!
MINUTES LATER THE SEARCH LEADS TO PAUL.
DOC, TAKE THE BOY BACK TO THE SAFETY OF THE SHIP.....I'LL FIND KIRK AND MEET YOU THERE PRONTO!
ARGON IS RELUCTANT BUT FINALLY AGREES.
TIME PASSES AND FREEZE SEARCHES IN VAIN.
GOT TO FIND HIM.... IF I KEEP WANDERING AROUND THE INFERNOCS ARE BOUND TO SPOT ME. PERHAPS THROUGH HERE!

KIRK! DESTRUCTON ALREADY HAS HIM IN A FREEZING CHAMBER!!! HE WAS PRETTY SURE HE COULD FORCE THE "DOC" TO, OPERATE TOMORROW! TOO BAD HE DIDN'T FIGURE ON "OLD FREEZE" TO GUM UP THE WORKS!
LET'S SEE... THAW TAKES TEN MINUTES, I'LL JUST RESET THE CONTROLS AND BE OUT OF HERE IN NO TIME!
NEXT....
Trapped!

SAVAGE EARTH
Ha & Trapped!
SEARCHING FOR KIRK; FREEZE FINDS HIM IN DESTRUCTON'S LAB., ALREADY PREPARED FOR THE BRAIN TRANS-PLANT. RELEASED FROM TEMPORARY FREEZING, KIRK QUICKLY REGAINS CONSCIOUS.
YEAH, AL, I'M OKAY; BUT I AIN'T TOO HAPPY ABOUT HAVING MY HEAD SHAVED!
FORGET IT 'OLD MAN,' YOU'LL BE THE HIT OF THE SENIOR PROM. COME ON, LETS GET BACK TO THE SHIP.
Suddenly...
I THOUGHT I HEARD A BUZZING SOUND... WHA'!!!
SOOO! THERE IS A FORTH MEMBER OF THE ARSON PARTY! I DISCOVERED YOUR ESCAPES AS I WENT TO TAKE MORE RE-SEARCH MATERIAL TO THE DOC-TOR. SURRENDER... YOU ARE TRAPPED! I'VE ALREADY DISPATCHED MEN TO BRING BACK YOUR COMPANIONS!
SURE WE'LL SURRENDER RIGHT AFTER, I BLAST YOU TO ATOMS!
FSSSHH!
FOOL! YOUR PUNY WEAPONS ARE USELESS AGAINST ME! THE SOLOR POWERED RAILS I RUN ON PERMIT ME TO CREATE AN INVINSIBLE FORCE FIELD!
KENTON
YEAH? WELL SUPPOSE I RIP THE INFRA RED STABILIZERS OUT OF YOUR SOLOR STORAGE BATTERIES... THEN HOW LONG WILL YOU AND THAT FORCE FIELD LAST?
STOP IT FOOL!!!! I'LL USE MY DEATH RAY!!! STOP... I WARN YOU!!!
KIRK.... GET BACK, HE.....
TZAT!

THA ROOM!
UUHHH! MY GLASSES!!
NEXT DESTRUCTONS WORLD CRUMBLES"

SAVAGE EARTH
"MISSLE OF DEATH"
IN A MOMENT OF UNCONTROLED RAGE, DESTRUCTON FIRES HIS DEATH RAY AT KIRK CONRAD.
AT THE SAME INSTANT, DR. ARGON, WHO MANAGED TO ELUDE THE INFERNOCS, IS IN FLIGHT ABOARD HIS SOLOR ROCKET.
WONDERING WHY HIS FRIENDS HAVE NOT EXITED THE CAVE, HE TUNES IN FREEZES COMMUNICATION LOCKET TO HEAR....
DEAD! YOU KILLED HIM!
TAKE THAT MAN PRISONER, YOU DOGS!
THE DEATH OF YOUR FRIEND LEAVES ME WITHOUT A TRANSPLANT SUBJECT. MOST UNFORTUNATE! LETS SEE; ABOUT 5'11", 175 LBS, OBVIOUS EYE DEFECT, NOT AS FORMIDABLE A PHYSICAL SPECIMEN AS YOUR COMPANION, BUT YOU'LL DO. WHEN MY MEN RETURN DR. ARGON, IT IS YOU WHO SHALL HOUSE THE BRAIN OF DESTRUCTON!
DAD!.... NOT KIRK! IT CAN'T HAVE HAPPENED!
SAVE THE TEARS BOY! LETS JUST THINK OF ONE THING RIGHT NOW; HELPING ALAN. WE CAN'T RISK RE-ENTERING THE CAVES,, BUT THERE'S A WAY... A LONG SHOT...!
GET TO THE TARGET FINDER SCREEN, DESTRUCTONS SOLOR TOWER IS IN THE MOUTH OF THE VOLCANO. "LOCK ON" FOR A MAGNETIC MISSLE AT 1000 YARDS
I JUST HOPE ALAN KEEPS HIS HEAD IN THESE NEXT FEW SECONDS!
FA SHAW
BA-ROOM

Cha. 10
"DESTRUCTON'S WORLD CRUMBLES"
ARGON'S MISSLE DESTROYS THE SOLOR TOWER AND THE UNLEASHED ENERGY CREATES A CHAIN REACTION OF HAVOC IN THE DEPTHS BELOW.
FREEZE; STANDING TOO CLOSE TO THE INITIAL EXPLOSION IS HURLED ACROSS THE LAB. INTO A CEILING BUTTRESS. THE IMPACT SNAPS OFF HIS GLASSES.
THE Savage Earth
MY EYES!
BLINDED BY NORMAL LIGHT FREEZE GROPES DESPERATELY FOR HIS GOGGLES.
A-A-ALAN... I GOT UM... OVER HERE!
KIRK! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DONE FOR!
NOT YET BUT MY TIMES RUNNING OUT... SOS YOURS IF YOU DON'T SCRAM.

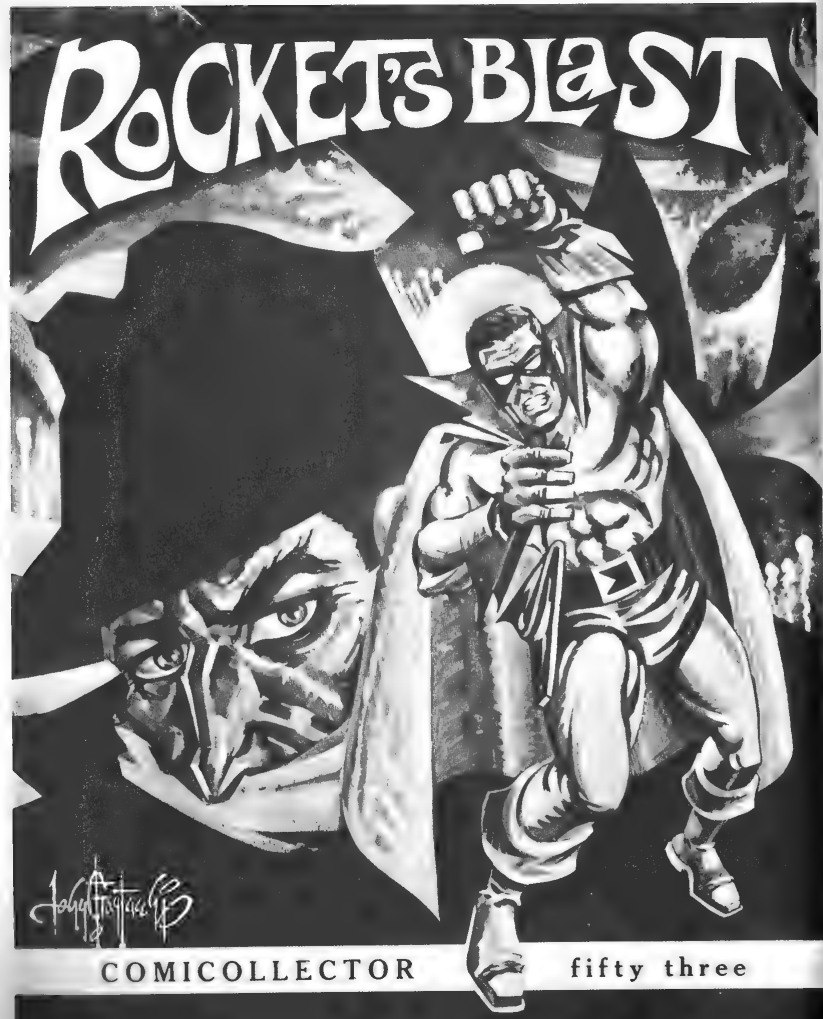
I'LL GET US BOTH OUT!
CAN'T! LEAVE ME!!! LEAVE ME WITH HIM!!! TRAPPED BY THE DEVICE THAT GAVE HIM ARTIFICAL LIFE... L-LEAVE ME!
GET IT OFF!!! IT'S CUT MY ENERGY RAIL ... I'M BEING STRANGLED!!! HELP ME ... I COMMAND YOU!
T-ZIT ZIT
HELP ME!!!
YOU'RE IN NO SHAPE TO ARGUE "BIG MAN!" HANG ON FOR A ROUGH RIDE!
NEWTON
THE DOOR ... BLOCKED BY FLAMES ... WE'RE TRAPPED!
NEXT... "CLIMAX!"

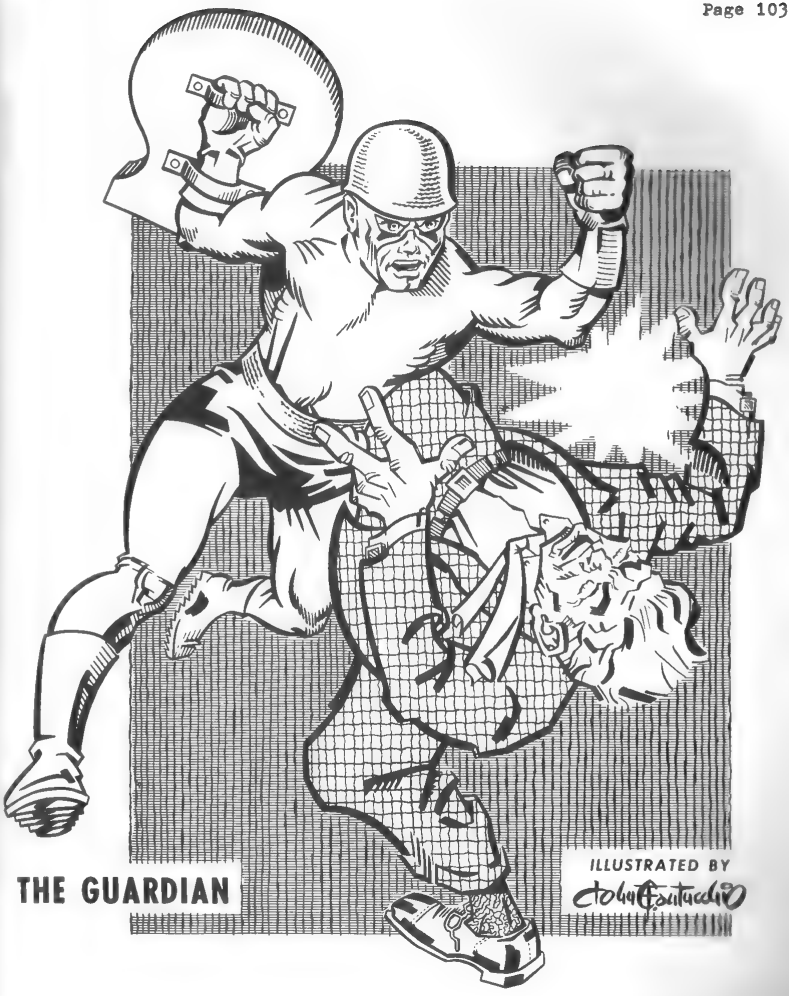
The Savage Earth
CHA. II
"CLIMAX"
ALAN! ALAN! ARE YOU OKAY? I'M TUNED IN ON YOU...
I HEAR YOU! KIRK'S DYING... I'VE GOT TO GET US OUT OF HERE BUT THE ENTRANCE IS BLOCKED BY FIRE. THIS WHOLE LAB IS GOING TO "GO" ANY MINUTE... CAN YOU HELP US???
LISTEN ALAN! HIS LAB IS LIKE MINE; SOMEWHERE THERE'S GOT TO BE AN AIR SUPPLY UNIT... FIND IT... CLOSE OFF THE BLOWERS AND YOU COULD PASS THROUGH IT TO THE OUTSIDE!
YES!!! I SEE IT! WE'LL TRY TO GET THROUGH, KEEP A RADIO BEARING ON US!
CLICK!
KENTON

ON THE LAST RESERVES OF
FREEZE INCHES HIS WAY
THE WINDING AIR CHAMBER.
IT'S LEVELING OFF... AT LAST! GOT TO REST... CAN'T MAKE ANOTHER UP-HILL CLIMB WITH HIM!
THE BLOWERS! WE'RE AT THE END! GOT TO GET PAST THOSE FANS THOUGH...
MY PISTOL BATTERY'S LOW... IF I COULD GET ONE MORE SHOT AT FULL INTENSITY!
FREEZE PUMPS THE MANUAL BATTERY CHARGER... AND...
BLAM-BAM!

HOURS LATER...
ARGON! HOW DID I GET ABOARD? I REMEMBER FIRING MY PISTOL... AND THEN???
I KEPT A "FIX" ON YOU SO I COULD DETERMINE YOUR EXIT POINT. WE FOUND YOU OUTSIDE THE FANS IN A STATE OF EXHAUSTION! LITTLE WONDER; YOU DRUG A 220 LB. DEAD MAN THROUGH NEARLY A MILE OF THAT TUBING!
THEN KIRK DIDN'T MAKE IT!
I'M AFRAID NOT! HE WAS STRUCK BY A DEATH RAY AND THERE WAS NO CHANCE... IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!
WHAT ABOUT THE MUTANTS, THEIR CAVERNS?
SOME PROBABLY SURVIVED. I REGRET HAVING TO SET MY HAND AGAINST THOSE MINDLESS BRUTES... A NEEDLESS SLAUGHTER IN ORDER TO SAVE OURSELVES. PERHAPS THOSE WHO DID ESCAPE THE HOLOCAUST CAN NOW EVOLVE BEYOND THE PRIMITIVE STAGE DESTRUCTION KEPT THEM IN THROUGH HIS GENETIC EXPERIMENTS.
THEN ISN'T IT AXIOMATIC THAT SCIENCE, LIKEWISE DELIVERED US OUT OF THAT WAR AND NOW LEAVES US AT THE MERCY OF UNTOLD TERRORS ON THIS... SAVAGE EARTH!
YET I WONDER; WAS IT BY CHANCE THAT WE STUMBLED INTO DESTRUCTON'S "WORLD" OR IS IT BUT ONE OF A MULTITUDE OF HORRORS VISITED UPON THIS PLANET BY THE RADIATION OF THE COSMIC BOMB?
MANKIND MASTERED THE LAND THE SEA AND FINALLY THE HEAVENS... ONLY TO BE DESTROYED BY HIS OWN SCIENCE!

FANTUCCHIO


ROCKET'S BLAST


THE GUARDIAN
ILLUSTRATED BY

BAT-FACTS PICTORIAL #2

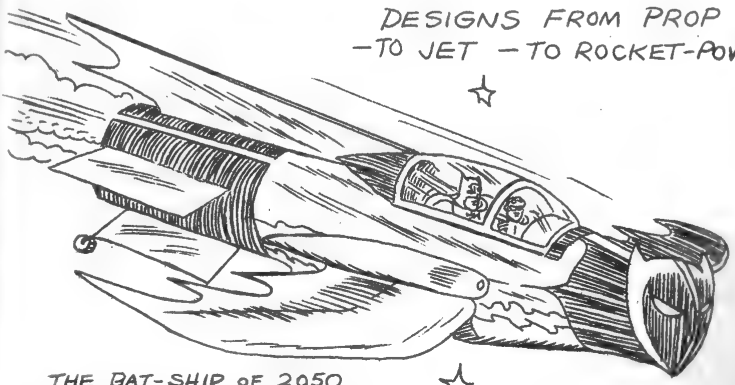
FROM 1939... THE FIRST BAT-PLANE ...TO...

EVOLUTION of the BAT-PLANE

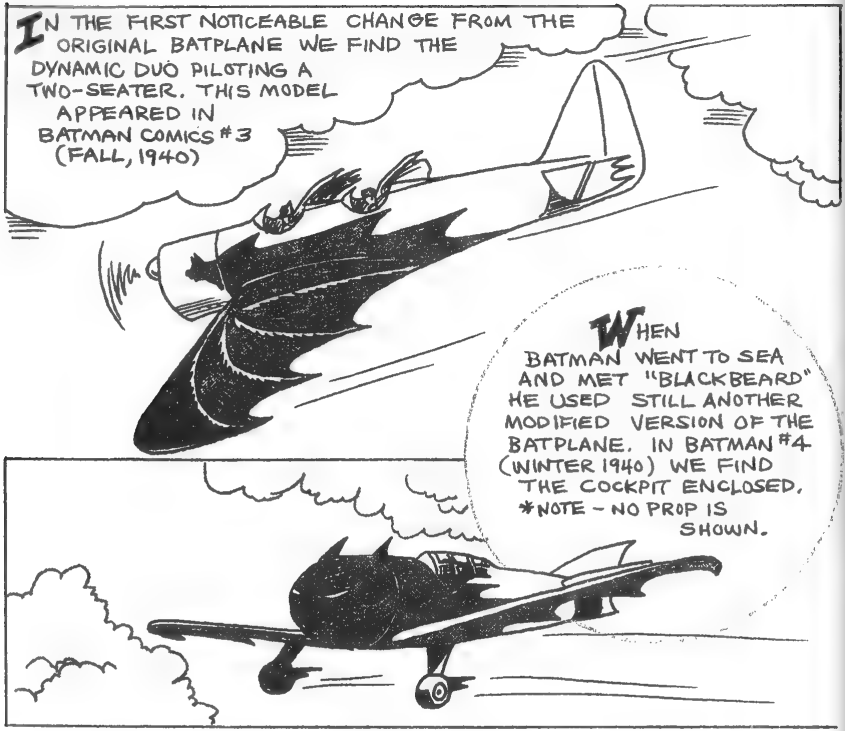
by BILJO WHITE

...THE BAT-SHIP of 2050

ALL THE EXCITING DESIGNS FROM PROP —TO JET —TO ROCKET-POWER!



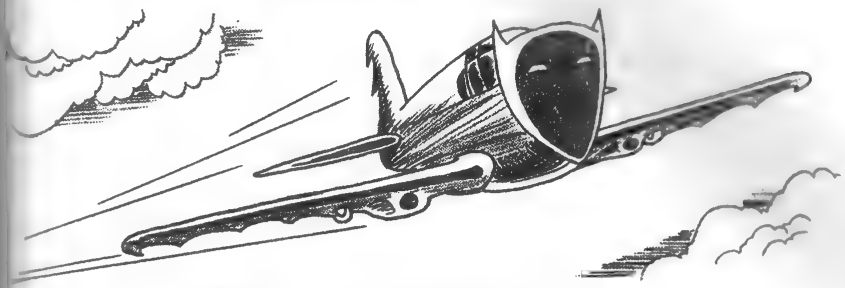
THE BAT-SHIP OF 2050
"BATMAN IN THE FUTURE!"
(BATMAN COMICS #59 — JUNE-JULY 1950)


IN THE FIRST NOTICEABLE CHANGE FROM THE ORIGINAL BATPLANE WE FIND THE DYNAMIC DUO PILOTING A TWO-SEATER. THIS MODEL APPEARED IN BATMAN COMICS #3 (FALL, 1940)
WHEN BATMAN WENT TO SEA AND MET "BLACKBEARD" HE USED STILL ANOTHER MODIFIED VERSION OF THE BATPLANE. IN BATMAN #4 (WINTER 1940) WE FIND THE COCKPIT ENCLOSED. *NOTE - NO PROP IS SHOWN.

IN BATMAN #10 (APRIL-MAY 1942) ROBIN CELEBRATES HIS 14th BIRTHDAY WITH A SURPRISE GIFT FROM HIS GUARDIAN...

*THE ABOVE DESIGN WAS THE MODEL MOST GENERALLY USED.

THE BAT-PLANE BECOMES JET-PROPELLED IN DETECTIVE COMICS #108 (FEB. 1946)

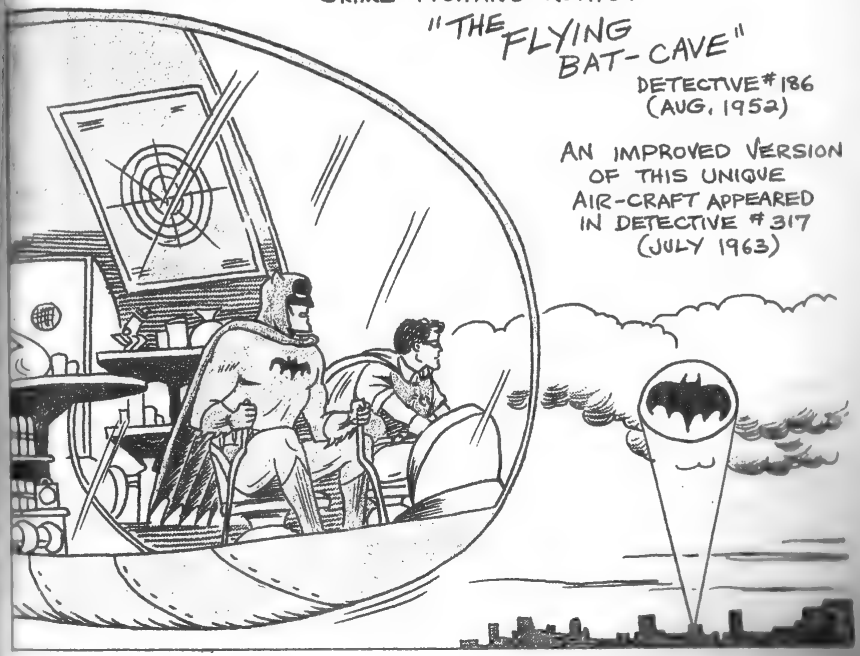


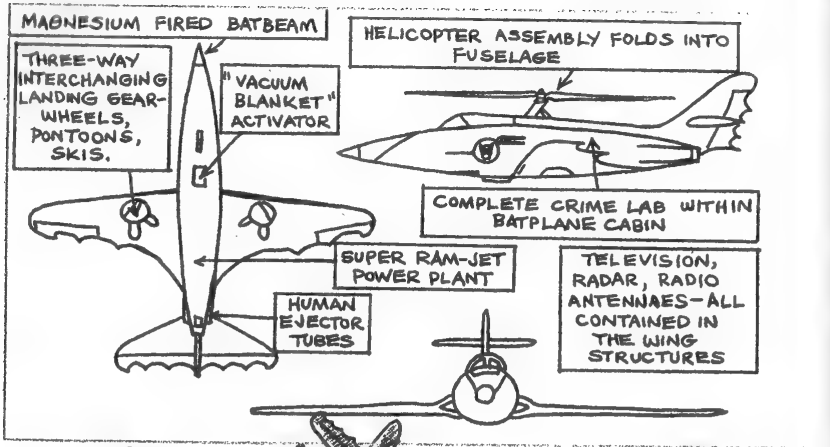
WHEN BATMAN AND ROBIN WERE FORCED TO AGREE NOT TO SET FOOT IN GOTHAM CITY, THEY INTRODUCED THEIR MOST SENSATIONAL CRIME-FIGHTING WEAPON—

"THE FLYING BAT-CAVE"

DETECTIVE #186 (AUG. 1952)

AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THIS UNIQUE AIR-CRAFT APPEARED IN DETECTIVE #317 (JULY 1963)




MAGNESIUM FIRED BATBEAM
THREE-WAY INTERCHANGING LANDING GEAR-WHEELS, PONTOONS, SKIS.
"VACUUM BLANKET" ACTIVATOR
HELICOPTER ASSEMBLY FOLDS INTO FUSELAGE
COMPLETE CRIME LAB WITHIN BATPLANE CABIN
SUPER RAM-JET POWER PLANT
HUMAN EJECTOR TUBES
TELEVISION, RADAR, RADIO ANTENNAES—ALL CONTAINED IN THE WING STRUCTURES

"The Birth of BATPLANE II" HEADLINED BATMAN #61 (OCT.-NOV. 1950). WHEN CROOKS OBTAINED THE OLD BATPLANE AFTER AN AIR EXPERIMENT ALLOWED IT TO COME INTO THEIR HANDS, BM & ROBIN RUSHED COMPLETION OF...

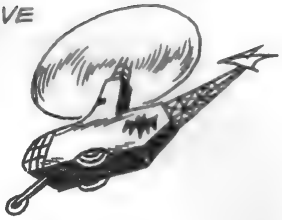
BAT-PLANE II ...

... A FABULOUS NEW PLANE THAT COULD CONVERT EVEN INTO A SUBMARINE. THIS WAS THE PERFECT CRIME-FIGHTING MACHINE. IN THIS THRILLING ADVENTURE WE SEE THE NEW BATPLANE, WITH BATMAN AT THE CONTROLS, CHALLENGE THREE OF THE OLDER MODELS.

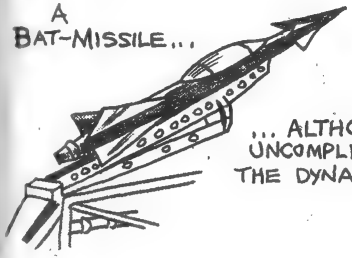
USING A "VACUUM BLANKET" ONE OF THE OLD PLANE'S MOTOR AND RADIO IS 'KNOCKED OUT' CAUSING IT TO CRASH. A BRILLIANT BATBEAM IN THE NOSE OF BP II BLINDS ANOTHER PILOT TRYING TO TAKE OFF. WITH HOOKS EXTENDING FROM BELOW THEIR NEW PLANE, BM & ROBIN 'CARRY' THE SECOND PLANE TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

WITH A GREAT HUMAN INTEREST ENDING, BATMAN FACES "FLYING TIGER" HAGGERTY — BUT SINCE THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE IS NOT TOO RARE, YOU MAY WANT TO TRY & OBTAIN A COPY TO READ THE CONCLUSION FOR YOURSELF.

BAT-COPTER — USED IN DETECTIVE COMICS #337 (MARCH-1965)



A BAT-MISSILE...



... ALTHOUGH UNCOMPLETELY FLIGHT-TESTED, WAS USED BY THE DYNAMIC DUO IN DETECTIVE #270 (AUG.'59)

ROBIN, PILOTING THE WHIRLY-BAT...

A ONE-MAN COPTER WHICH WAS PUT INTO GOOD USE WHEN BATMAN INJURED HIS LEGS DURING A CHARITY DRIVE, BATMAN #120 (DEC. 1958)

The BAT-PLANE OF TODAY!

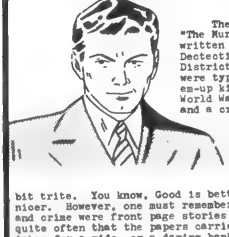
THE TEAM OF BM & ROBIN NEVER KNOW WHERE THEIR NEXT ADVENTURE WILL TAKE THEM, BUT ONE THING FOR SURE, THE EVER-CHANGING BATPLANE WILL BE READY WHEN NEEDED.

32 Years With.....

Article by:
Bob Cosgrove &
Martin Greim
assisted by
JERRY BAILS

When one thinks of the Golden Age of Comics, it brings to mind many fabulous characters, as well as a host of famous artists--Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Reed Crandall, Joe Kubert, Lou Fine, just to name a few. However, should one try to recall a famous writer of that period, he is often hard pressed to come up with a name. Oh, there were a few - Joe Simon, Otto Binder, perhaps Bill Finger and Jerry Seigal, but the ones that most fans would remember best is that of GARDNER FOX--a man who has worked in the field for thirty two- odd years.

Although Fox thought he was going to be a lawyer, and even went to law school, fate knew otherwise. Even in his high-school days, Fox did dialogue and captions for a schoolmate buddy with cartoonist ambitions. Fox's first published story came about as an accident--while sick in bed with the flu, he wrote to pass the time, only to find that his work was published by Gold Medal. From there, it was only a short jump into the comics field, under the editorship of Vince Eldon, at the company destined to become famous as Superman-DC. His early works included such crime-adventure tales as Speed Saunders (an ace detective), Three Aces, Radio Squad, Cotton Carver (a Jungle Jim type character), an occasional Batman, and his first "brainchild" Steve Malone!



STEVE MALONE

The first Steve Malone story, "The Murdered Ambassador", was written March 20, 1938 for Dectective Comics. Malone was a District Attorney and his stories were typical of the action shoot-em-up kind prevalent in the pre-World war II era. He was tough and a crack shot with a gun. In those days (pre-comics code) there were no quams about shooting to kill or beating the daylights out of a bad guy. Fox's Malone stories, by today's standards, would seem a bit trite. You know, Good is better than Evil because it's nicer. However, one must remember, shoot-outs in the streets and crime were front page stories in those days. It was quite often that the papers carried stories of someone being taken for a ride, or a daring bank robbery, so it was only natural for the comics to create crime busting heroes like Malone.

On or about April 1, 1938, Gardner Fox began writing a story about a magician. A magician that would set the pace for many others of his kind to follow. This magician was known as Zatara!

ZATARA

The first Zatara story Gardner Fox wrote was called, "The Haunted Farm". This story appeared in Action Comics #2 - 1938. Zatara was billed as "The Master Magician" and to work his magic he used a mimic that was imitated by many others of his kind. When he used magic, he spoke what he wanted done - backwards.

Zatara was one of the longer running super heroes. He appeared in Action Comics from issue #2 to #67 and in two issues more, #129 and 130. He returned by Fox in issue #4 of Adventure Comics, when his daughter Tekanni began to search for him.

From mystics to mystery; Gardner Fox, on April 17, 1939, wrote "Theft at the World's Fair" and launched the career of Sandman!

SANDMAN

The early Sandman wore no costume. He was a man of mystery. Clad in cloak and helmet, gas gun gripped in his strong right hand, he fought crime by knocking his foes unconscious with gas. The Sandman was wanted by the police, even though he never committed a crime. This was perhaps due to the gas-mask he wore to protect himself from his gas gun's fumes. His alter ego was Wesley Dodds, a rich playboy. However, when crime was committed, he became the dreaded Sandman!

Sandman appeared in Adventure Comics #40 thru 102, but with issue #69 his costume was changed to a tight fitting super hero one. Gone were the gas-mask and the gas gun and also his aura of mystery.

Besides using his gas gun, in issue #61 a weapon called the wirepoon gun was introduced. This gun fired a barbed shaft, with a line attached, and enabled Sandman to swing around much like Spiderman. Though the early Sandman had been replaced by Simon & Kirby's super hero one, when Fox revived Sandman in issue #46 of Justice League of America, it was the Sandman with the gas-mask he brought back. Only this time, for a weapon, he used a strange gun that turned molecules of sand, that he would toss, into anything that is derived from sand. (Such as glass, cement, etc.) So the revived version of Sandman actually used sand to fit his name.

One of Fox's lesser known heroes was a character called Captain X of the R.A.F.

CAPTAIN X of the R.A.F.

Captain X was in reality Buck Dare, an American reporter based in London, England. He fought along side England's R.A.F. during World War II. At a sheltered hillside, near Croyden Airport, Captain X's hidden underground chamber was located. Here, his plastic airplane, Jenny, was kept in order by his joke telling assistant - Stuffy. Captain X's plane was equipped with eight machine guns and a vibrating ray, which allowed the craft to hover. Captain X appeared in only a few issues of Star Spangled Comics (1 thru 7) so is not as well known as many early DC heroes.

From the time Gardner Fox began writing, many of his stories were based on the events of the day. In the case of the above mentioned Captain X, Fox had him fighting the Nazis before America got into the war. You might call Captain X an English costumed hero. Fox worked with many artists, in his early days. Craig Flessel, Mort Meskin, Sheldon Moldoff, Everett Hibbard and Joe Kubert, just to name a few. Some of these artists conveyed Fox's stories with brilliance, others did not.

Not all of Gardner's time was devoted to writing. He had a few hobbies too. He makes and collects miniature soldiers, (an old hobby of MLG's too, by the way.) specializing in ancient and medieval figures. He's also made a study of old weapons and all phases of history and archeology. This, of course, aides him in his writing.

As the popularity of costumed heroes increased, Gardner Fox worked on more super powered heroes. Heroes such as the stellar powered hero Starman!

Gardner Fox

Art for Gardner Fox picture adapted from SHOWCASE #35.

1940 was a great year for super heroes. Fox, teamed with the artistic talents of Everett Hibbard, created one of the most popular heroes of the day - The Flash. The Flash appeared in a comic bearing his own name "Flash Comics", but it could just as easily have been titled Fox Comics, for Gardner Fox wrote most of the magazine's stories. Besides the Flash, Fox wrote King Standish, (a hero in a top hat, mask and tux, who was a master of disguise.) Cliff Cornwal and fan favorite, for many years - Hawkman. Fox's creation proved so popular that the Flash received his own magazine "All Flash" in the summer of 1941.

STARMAN

Adventure Comics #61 (April, 1941). Ted Knight, wealthy playboy, made a remarkable discovery. He found a way to use infra-rays from distant stars. Using these rays, in a device he called a gravity rod, he overcame the forces of gravity and launched bolts of energy. After perfecting his gravity rod, he devised a red and green costume and became known as the star-powered hero Starman!

Early art was by Jack Burnley and Mort Meskin and for the art of this time, it was a step higher than most. Fox's villains were some of the best too. In issue #67 of Adventure Comics, The Mist made his first appearance. He was a character who, by using an invisa-solution, made objects coated with it disappear. He also wore a cloak that created the illusion of turning his body to mist. When Fox brought Starman back in issue #29 of the JLA he increased the powers of his gravity rod. Now, he had the rod drawing its increased power from the cosmic forces of the universe. His rod was now called the "cosmic rod".

THE FLASH

The Flash obtained his super speed when as Jay Garrick, a college student, he knocked over some retorts filled with hard water. The gas from the smashed retorts overcame him and he passed out. He was discovered the next morning and rushed to a hospital, where he lay between life and death for weeks. However, his young, healthy body fought its way back to life and after he was discharged from the hospital, he found the gas had given him the power to run faster than the speed of light. Only his lab aide and girl friend, Joan Williams, knew of his dual identity. The Flash lasted 104 issues of "Flash Comics". During this time many artists worked on the strip. Some of them drew him so crudely and unimaginatively that Fox's fabulous hero lost many readers. However, the art did get better. Joe Kubert illustrated an ocassional story, as well as Carmine Infantino and Alex Toth. Fox's genius created some memorable Flash villians too. The Turtle, Ragdoll, The Thorn, and The Piddler, just to name a few. It is a shame the art didn't always match the story.

In More Fun Comics, Gardner Fox wrote stories for perhaps the most colorful and confusing mystic of the Golden Age - Dr. Fate. I say confusing because, of all the early DC heroes, Dr. Fate had more changes in costume and story than any other.

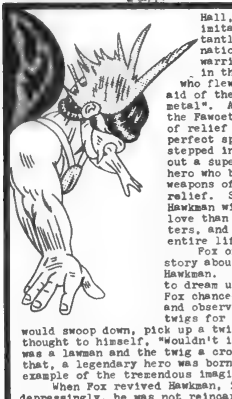
DR. FATE

Dr. Fate, being both an alchemist and a mage, learned the ultimate secret of the universe, the conversion of energy into matter and matter into energy. He had two origins. The first being, that he was 1,000,000 years old and placed on Earth by elder gods, long before the time of man. His second origin told of how Kent Nelson, son of an archeologist, found the casket of Nabu the Wise. By pushing a lever, he sent a flood of gas into the casket and released Nabu from a state of hibernation. Nabu was from the planet Gilia and he tought Kent the secrets of the universe and lost mystical arts. He also gave him a uniform he was to wear as Dr. Fate. Dr. Fate's headquarters was a comic innovation. It was a doorless, windowless, Salem witch tower. He entered it, by walking through its walls. In issue #72 of More Fun Comics, his mask was modified so you could see the lower half of his face. Later, he lost his cape and epaulets. In issue #79 he was knocked out and in later stories he couldn't break his bonds or fly. Issue #85 saw him become a doctor in one issue. Inconstancy was his by-word.

As far as fandom is concerned, such favorites as The Flash and Green Lantern might be okay, but their real hero was Hawkman. It was Hawkman that had the older fans screaming "REVIVAL"--Hawkman that they oohed and ahhed over after his appearance in Brave and Bold--Hawkman they fought for until, through the goodness of DC editor Julie Schwartz, he was granted his own magazine. Why? What charm did this character possess?

HAWKMAN

Hawkman, or simply the Hawk, as he was called in the forties, possessed a certain natural charm. Who WOULDN'T want to be able to soar thru the air like an eagle? And wasn't it a bit more believable to fly with your own strength and an imposing set of wings, than to float thru the sky, Superman like, in blatant defiance of the laws of gravity? Not only that, but Fox imbued him with a certain uniqueness. Sure, he was Carter



Hall, a wealthy Bruce Wayne imitation, but more importantly, he was the reincarnation of a former Egyptian warrior who had fought evil in the time of the Pharoahs, who flew thru the skys with the aid of the anti-gravity "ninth metal". At this time, when only the Fawcett line provided a bit of relief from the well-nigh perfect specimen of manhood who stepped into a laboratory and came out a superman, this re-incarnated hero who battled crime with weapons of the past was a welcome relief. Somehow, Fox had created Hawkman with perhaps a bit more love than with his other characters, and it showed, thruout his entire life.

Fox once told the following story about the creation of Hawkman. One day, while trying to dream up a new super hero, Fox chanced to look out a window and observed a bird collecting twigs for its nest. The bird would swoop down, pick up a twig, then fly away. Fox thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be great if that bird was a lawman and the twig a crook." So as simply as that, a legendary hero was born. This story is a prime example of the tremendous imagination of this writer.

When Fox revived Hawkman, in Brave and Bold #34, depressingly, he was not reincarnated, but merely another visitor from space. So original was Fox's handling of this old concept, however, that it took on a fresh look--new angles were added. Hawkman was married, and in his civillian identity, harrassed by a pretty museum worker who would have liked nothing better than to break up his marriage. Sadly, when Murphy Anderson took over the art, Fox's imagination seemed to fail. Mavis Trent, Hawkgirl's rival, was forgotten, and the stories took on a depressingly gimmicky-over- plotted outlook. It was a shame, really. Hawkman was Fox's best.

Not all of Gardner Fox's work was for DC. Beginning in January, 1940, under the pen name of Michael Blake, he began writing the first of 21 adventures for the Columbia Comic Corp. These adventures were about a most unusual hero called - The Face!

THE FACE

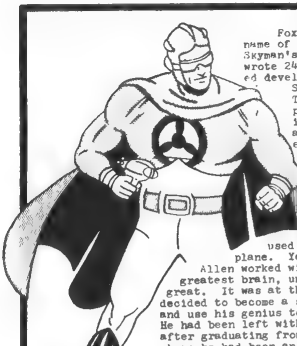
The Face was in reality Tony Trent, a radio announcer and news correspondent. After witnessing a murder, by two men in police uniforms, he decided to have a special mask made for himself, at a mask shop. A grotesque green faced mask that fitted over his head, yet so thin and flexible that it could easily be rolled up to a small pocket size, was the end result. Tony was going to use this mask to frighten criminals and to fight crime. While he was trying the mask on, the two men who had committed the murder he had seen earlier, came in. It seems they had rented police uniforms, to disguise themselves, and were now returning to kill the costume shop owner. The Face appeared before the criminals, paralyzed them with fright and immediately put them out of commission. However, just as the police arrived, the shop owner was killed by a mysterious hooded figure. Inspector Biggs blames The Face and markes him as the murderer. Throughout The Face's career, Biggs was always after him.

In many Face stories the emphasis was on the Face's mask, but in later stories the only time the Face was seen was in flashback sequences. The action now focused on Tony Trent. The Face had some fabulous art by Mart Bailey and story wise some of the best ever written. The stories were written on a more mature level and way ahead of their time.

From time to time Fox would try his hand at a weird tale of science-fiction story for pulp magazines. He found that this change of pace kept him from going stale. In the early 1950's he did his first paperback book, a science novel called "The Borgia Blade". Fox has had over thirty novels published, some under his own name (using "Jeremiah Ellerbe" as a alias), some under his six pen names.

May of 1940 saw Gardner Fox, under the editorship of Vincent Sullivan and teamed with the artistic talents of Ogden Whitney, turn out the leading character in the Columbia Comics line....Skyman!

SKYMAN

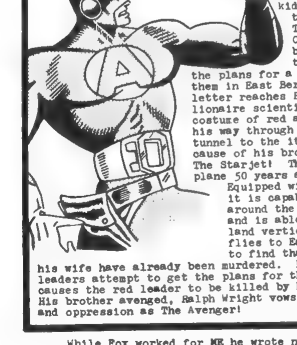


Fox, under the pen name of Paul Dean, was Skyman's first writer. He wrote 24 stories and helped develop the character. Skyman was Allen Turner, whose parents were killed in an airplane accident, in his early teens. Allen was taken in by his uncle, Peter Turner, a great scientist, who explained his parents death was caused by faulty material used in his father's plane. Year after year, Allen worked with America's greatest brain, until he too became great. It was at this point Allen decided to become a scientist-policeman and use his genius to overcome evil. He had been left with a fortune and after graduating from Harnel College, where he had been an all-around athlete, he assumed a Bruce Wayne type of identity.

Skyman's greatest invention was The Wing, a huge red, white and blue aircraft that was shaped like a boomarang. The wing utilized the power of the north and south pole magnetic fields. These fields kept The Wing stationary whenever Skyman wanted to leave the plane. This craft was equiped with the same type of crossbar devise that the Ditko Blue Beetle used to leave his bug craft. Skyman was finally discontinued in issue #102, but while he flew high his stories were presented in an adult style.

Fox also worked on some western characters...Tim Holt and Straight Arrow. These characters were put out by a company called ME (the same people who published the original Ghost Rider). Six years after Skyman was discontinued Gardner Fox created a hero copied after him...The Avenger!

THE AVENGER



The Avenger came into being when Colonel Ralph Wright and his wife were kidnapped and forced to go to East Berlin. The Reds forced the Colonel to write his brother, Roger, and tell him to deliver the plans for a new airplane to them in East Berlin. When the letter reaches Roger Wright, millionaire scientist, he dons a costume of red and white and makes his way through an underground tunnel to the item that is the cause of his brothers kidnaping... The Starjet! The Starjet is a plane 50 years ahead of its time. Equipped with an atomic motor it is capable of flying around the world endlessly and is able to take off and land vertically. The Avenger flies to East Berlin, only to find that his brother and his wife have already been murdered. He foils the red leaders attempt to get the plans for the Starjet which causes the red leader to be killed by his superiors. His brother avenged, Ralph Wright vows to prevent crime and oppression as The Avenger!

While Fox worked for ME he wrote nearly every story they published. This was primarily because his life long friend Vincent Sullivan was ME's editor.

After the "black friday" of the comic book, when the super-hero seemed gone for good, the comics switched to horror, and, after the code came in, science fiction. Fox did some nice work in this period, but DC plots, hampered by the code, too often revolved around some sort of gimmick

in NO case came thru with the sock ending and moral of the EC comics. Likewise, the art, adequate as it was, was hopelessly outclassed by EC's pre-code work. Throughout this time Fox was writing more paperbacks, even as he does today. The same holds true of them, tho' they are more enjoyable than the comic work - good adventure and excitement, not profound meaning.

Adam Strange

Ironically, this s-f trend led, in 1958, to the creation of the s-f hero, ADAM STRANGE , who travelled from Earth to the planet Rann to fight the threats to this adopted planet. At first by Mike Sekowsky but soon by Carmine Infantino, Strange fast became the s-f hero pars excellance. What Flash Gordon was to the newspaper, Strange was to the comic book. Like Flash, Strange's adventures revealled a whole culture, a civilization. Like Flash, Strange was superbly illustrated, although not quite as well. Strange enjoyed the inks of Murphy Anderson, unquestionably the best inker DC enjoyed, with the possible exception of Wally Wood, and voted many times the best inker in comic books.

By the time Strange faded into limbo, super-heroes and Marvel Comics were IN, and Fox was churning out fine stories for many of them. There was Batman, by Infantino; the Atom, another revamped revival, by Gil Kane, the Justice League, by Sekowsky, and an occasional Green Lantern, by the talented Gil Kane. Most of all however, there was The Flash, respected by fans and competitors as one of the finest mags on the stands. John Broome wrote many tales, but the ones Fox wrote were among the scarlet speedster's very best. One Alley Award Winner was entitled "Flash of Two Worlds." This story told of how The Flash accidently vibrated himself through a dimensional barrier into the world of the Golden Age Flash. This event was explained thusly: "Two objects can occupy the same space and time if they vibrate at different speeds. Obviously, both earths developed similar customs and heroes". The present day Flash learned of the other one because he had read of him, as a fictional character, in a magazine called "Flash Comics". It was explained that Gardner Fox had written about the Golden Age Flash after his adventures had come to him in his dreams. When Fox went to sleep, his mind became "Tuned In" on the vibratory earth. This Earth 1 and Earth 2 idea, as it was called, was a stroke of genius on Fox's part, for it left the door open for future Golden Age - present day adventures between super-heroes.

To wind up this Gardner Fox feature, no two magazines are more worthy of discussion than All Star Comics - Justice Society of America and todays Justice League of America.

The Flash

Hawkman

J.S.A. - J.L.A.

Superman

Batman

While the enthusiastic majority might have acclaimed Hawkman king, in the Golden Age, many favored other Fox-scripted characters: The Flash--Starman--Dr. Fate--The Sandman. What matter? One could find all his favorites in All Star Comics, where the world's most colorful heros had banded together to fight crime and injustice as...THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA! The Justice Society, the very name struck terror into the hearts of criminals, for at one time or another, Superman, Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Spectre, Atom, Sandman, Dr. Fate, Hourman, Starman, Dr. Mid-Nite, Wonder Woman, Wildcat, Mr. Terrific, Red Tornado, Johnny Thunder and the beautiful Black Canary battled their way across the pages of All Star. No less impressive were the artists that graced these pages--Kubert, Toth, Infantino, Kirby--All Star had them all, and far too many lesser lights as well.

Green Lantern

The Flash

The Idea of the Justice Society of America was conceived and developed in 1940 by three men...M. C. Gaines, publisher and managing editor; Sheldon Mayer, editor; and Gardner F. Fox, writer. Fox wrote the first Justice Society story in All Star Comics #3 and everyone following-up until issue #38. His basic pattern in these storys, was to have each member individually featured in different chapters, coming together as a team only in the introduction and conclusion. In most cases, each chapter was drawn by a different artist. In issue #38 Fox introduced a more flexible format. The members were now featured in two or three man teams and only occasionally soloed.

The Atom

Green Lantern

In the March, 1960 issue of Brave and the Bold (#28), Fox and his cohorts attempted to recapture the bygone glory of the JSA. In some cases, he was successful. The early Brave and Bold stories, some of the first JLA epics in their own magazine, and a few of the JSA-JLA teamups, made possible by the introduction of "Earth Two" in the Flash series, ranked as examples of Fox at his best. But Sekowsky's early fine art was beginning a rapid decline, even with the third JLA story, "The Case of the Stolen Super Powers." Hampered by lack of space and an ever increasing mob of super-heroes, Fox seemed to go stale. Some of the stories rank as the poorest put out by DC in the era. The fault was most certainly not Fox's, but it is true nonetheless.

Dr. Mid-Nite

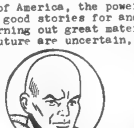
Aquaman

Begining with issue #25 of the Justice League of America, the powers-to-be at DC realized the JLA was too overcrowded to write good stories for and began featuring fewer members. Fox, once again, began turning out great material. To what heights this fine author will soar in the future are uncertain, but you can be sure of one thing: As long as fandom exists, the name Gardner Fox will be spoken of with respect and admiration.

Layouts by:
Bob Cosgrove

Johnny Thunder

Wonder Woman



J'onn J'onzz

Wonder Woman

Art by:
Martin [illegible]
Ross Andru

NEWTON

Captain Marvel
SOLOMON
HERCULES
ATLAS
ZEUS
ACHILLES
MERCURY

the
Guardian
BOXING
DON
MILLER

KENTON

PLANET
COMICS
ARTICLE BY RAYMOND MILLER
JOHN MARTIN 1946
© FICTION HOUSE MAG.
Futura

PLANET COMICS IS PERHAPS the best of the Fiction House group, and the one that is most collected and most valued. The first issue was dated Jan. 1940 and the comic was a monthly for the first 5 or 6 issues, and then it went bi-monthly.

PLANET wasn't really featuring good art or stories- in my opinion- in the first dozen or so issues, but it is these issues that seem to bring the most money. It wasn't until about the 10th issue that PLANET added many of its better known characters--those that would have a home in this comic for years to come. Only 3 of PLANET's long running strips started with the first issue. These were Flint Baker, Auro-Lord of Jupiter, and the Red Comet.

Flint Baker, in the first 13 issues, was the main hero and was the cover feature on most, if not all, of those 13. He was to appear in PLANET 1 thru 25 before he would team up with Reef Ryan to form the Space Rangers. The stories featured such writers as Al Schmidt and Huxley Haldane. In a way Flint was a cross between Flash Gordon and a costumed hero (in many stories he wore a cape). Along with his girl Mimi, he spent most of his time in space as Earth's No. 1 Planet scout. Art was by Dick Briefer, Arthur Peddy, Nick Viscardi, Joe Doolin, and Artie Saff.

Auro Lord of Jupiter was the only F. H. character to have 2 different series and origins. His first series was in #1-29 except for a few issues before #11. And his second go-around was in #41-61. In the first origin we find a space ship carrying earth people Prof. Hardwich, his wife, and child on a cruise between Uranus and Jupiter. Suddenly they collide with a flaming meteor and because of the powerful gravitational pull of Jupiter, their ship crashes on that planet, and only the child survives. He is befriended by a saber tooth tiger and as years pass he grows to a great size and because of the tremendous gravitational pull on Jupiter, his muscles become as strong as steel. As time passes he discovers other people living on the planet and he has to fight some of them to stay alive. Well, he won and was made their leader and they called him "auro", which meant unconquerable. This was in the first issue but later issues show him to be nothing more than a jungle character complete with loin cloth, on the planet Jupiter. Some of the art on these stories were poor but the outstanding ones were drawn by Raphael Astarita, whose real name was John Martin. Martin drew most of the 1942 Auro stories, as well as the early Hooks Devlin stories in FIGHT COMICS. After a lapse of 11 issues Auro returns in #41. Chester Edson, a young scientist, is knocked over the head by the superintendant of the plant they both worked at. Seems the super (a chap named Nelson) had been taking money from the kitty and by getting rid of Edson, everyone would think Chester had skipped with it. So, here we go again. Edson is hid on a rocket and "bang", it crashes on Jupiter. Some Jupiterians pick up his body and take it to a laboratory where his spirit is transferred into the body of Auro. It seems that Auro has been dead lo these many years. Now, thanks to Chet, he once again lives. The next dozen or so stories show the outline of Chet, running around after Auro, always talking even though no one could see or hear him. Stupid, I say, and this innovation was later dropped. Auro now had two spirits in him--his and Chets--he also now had a girl, Dorna. Many of the first series carried the name John Charles as the writer. However, the person who wrote the greater number of stories in both series, was Dick Charles. The first art of the 2nd series was by August M. Froelich. EC's Graham Engels was the last artist. Other artists who worked on the strip were Seymour Reit, Don Rico, R. L. Golden and Joe Doolin.

The Red Comet, by Cy Thatcher, appeared in issues #1, 3-20, 37 and is a PLANET classic. He was a costumed hero who fought crime all over the universe. In many stories he grew to giant-size, like the Spectre. He was accompanied by a girl, Dolores, and a boy, Rusty. Rudy Palais drew some stories and the last Red Comet story in #20, Sept. 1942. Other artists were Saul Rosen, Joe Doolin, and John Celardo.

With #21 the Red Comet was replaced by "The Lost World", which, from that issue on, was PLANET's lead feature. Palais also did the first "Lost World" story but then N. Viscardi took over for #22 and was in turn followed by Ingels and Renee. It was the 33rd century and the planet wars had left Earth almost uninhabited by human life. Only a few had survived and one of them was Hunt Bowman. Then a space ship landed and Bowman was captured by Volta men and taken to the lost world. On the ship he met Lyssa, Queen of the Lost World. Hunt and Lyssa escaped the Volta men, who now control the whole universe. One finds the green, dried-up faces of these warriors everywhere. In #24 Hunt and Lyssa returned to Earth to try and band together those who were left in order to fight the Voltas. However, they never returned to the Lost World so I guess Earth became the "Lost World". By 1943 issues 27-31 really featured some weird art by Graham Engels. Renee took over with issue 32 and lasted thru #49. George Evans then did the strip from 50-64.

THE only weapon Hunt ever carried was a bow and arrows, and his clothing consisted of a skirt and at times (when Renee and Evans handled the strip) big topped boots--something like firemen wear. By the time Evans took over and gave her new clothes, Lyssa was almost naked.

In #36 they were joined by 3 more Earth people. Two boys, Bruce & Robbin, and a girl, Bonnie. However, Bruce was soon killed and in order to save him, Robin transferred Bruce's brain into a Volta body. These 3 became part of the strip for the next 8 or so issues.

The Volta men had a peculiar way of talking, for example, "Here the Earthman is here," and "No, not fair is." Oh well, they weren't much to look at either. "The Lost world was last in #70, but some of the last few stories were really reprints.

Reef Ryan wasn;t much different from PLANET's similar strip, Flint Baker. Reef had his female assistant in the Princess Vara of the Planet Xalan. Vara's planet was slowly being taken over by her enemies but good old Reef was there to help her. This strip did not always enjoy good art and neither did the Flint Baker strip. While both had their share of good art, it was seldom at the same time. The writer of the Ryan stories was Hugh Fitzhugh. With #26, Sept. 1943, PLANET COMICS was cut to 60 pages and instead of dropping any characters, the Ryan and Baker strips were combined to form the Space Rangers, with Fitzhugh as the writer. After a few issues Reef was replaced in favor of a boy named Herc (#42). Then in #43 a girl named Mary joined Flint and Herc to make it a family affair. However, Mary only lasted a few issues while Herc remained to the end. After #64 there were a few reprints of earlier Space Rangers stories as well as solo Reef Ryan and Flint Baker stories. The Space Rangers were drawn by Lee Elias, Bob Lubbers, Cavallo, "Permo", and Fiction House's worst artists, as far as I'm concerned, Doyle. A couple of the Reef Ryan artists were George Tuska and Lebleck.

Gale Arden and her Girl Squadron began in #4, April 1940, and was last in #42, May 1946. Written by Douglas McKee and drawn by a number of artists, of which the best was Fran Hopper; she took over with #28. Gale was the typical fully-developed Fiction House girl. She was sort of a female Space Ranger and had command over a number of girls known as the Girl Squadron. Around #34 the squadron was dropped and Gale found herself nursemaid to a number of absent Gale Allen was one of PLANET's greats and it was sad to see her dropped but her replacement --wow! (earlier artists were Bob Powell, Saul Rosen, and Jewell.

Yes, wow-- in the person of Futura. Here was a good series with fine art, especially the first six issues, which were drawn by John Martin. She started in #43, July 1943. The strip began with a scantly-clad girl being stalked by someone or something unseen. She made it safely home but then was abducted by her invisible persuer and taken, by space ship, to the city of Cymradia in space. There she met dozens of others like her -- guinea pigs all. There were more ordeals; tests of heat, cold, stress, --until she thought she'd go mad. Then Futura escaped and it was her against the brain people of Cymradia.

John Martin drew these first six stories in a style he had never used before. After Martin, others drew it, while John Douglas was credited with writing all of the stories. Futura was drawn like Prince Valiant--no word balloons in the panels. She was last in #64, Spring 1950.

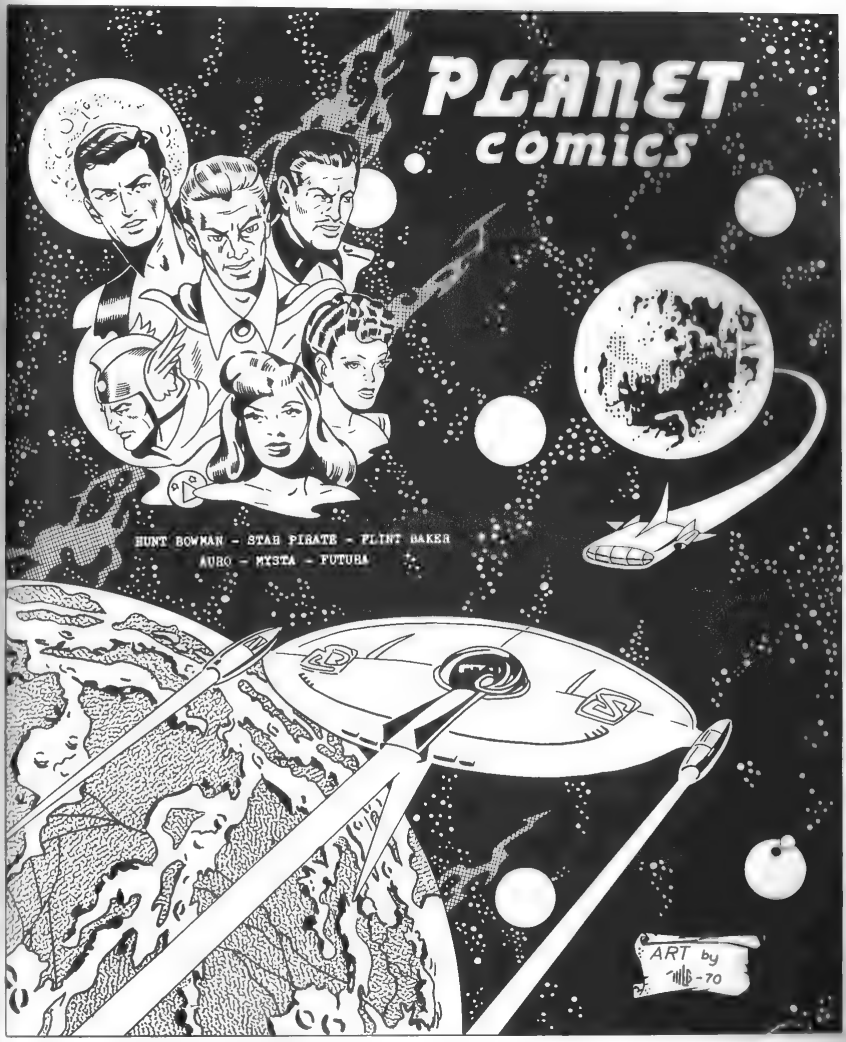
Issue #8, May 1941, saw the debut of Star Pirate by Leonardo Vinci. He was sort of a Robin Hood of the Space ways...wanted by Police and criminals alike. George Appel was the early artist but his work was never outstanding. He was followed by George Tuska, Murphy Anderson(33-38, 40-51), M. Whitman(53-58), and Leonard Starr (59-61). While Anderson was working on the strip Star was joined by Black Beard, his new partner. He also picked up the anti-gravity boots that were to become Star's trademark. We now have an almost completely new strip from what Appel and Tuska did. Here was a strip loaded with dames after Appel left. Star Pirate last Apeared in issue #70.

ONE of the most famous OF ALL PLANET features was Mars-God of War, which appeared from issue 15 thru 35. The stories were by Ross Gallen and art on all stories was done by Joe Doolin. Mars-God of War, the spirit of destruction, incarnation of hate, in Mars was the concentration of all the evil in the universe. While only a spirit, Mars was helpless, but when he would single out a man or woman who had evil in them his spirit would enter their body and take control of it. Now, in solid form he was able to spread his seed of hate. But at the end of each story good always triumphed and Mars was once again just a spirit--waiting for a new body.

Long years later Mars stumbles on what is left of a man who, through war and hate, has almost destroyed himself. In #35 MARS finds that one Dr Kort has taken a young boy and girl to the moon and by means of electric impulses has placed all the culture and knowledge known to man into their brains. It was now their duty to replant love and knowledge back into the universe. Each was given a robot to help them. But Mars enters one robot and tries to kill the doctor and the girl destroys it. Since it was the boy's robot he shows dislike for the girl and this was Mars' cue to take over his body. He succeeds in killing the doctor and destroys the lab.. In a fight for her life she kills the boy and Mars is defeated--by a girl--A girl left alone, with her robot, to face the universe. This girl was Mysta--Mysta of the Moon. In issue 36 the story carried that title and after the splash page Mars disappeared forever. Now Ross Gallun had a new strip and Joe Doolin handled the art until Fran Hopper took over. In #36 Mysta battled a man called The Brain--the same chaacter Doolin had the Rangers of Freedom fighting years before. Other artists to do Mysta were Maurice Whitman, Matt Baker, Rubimore, and Charles Sultan. Mysta last appeared in PLANET #62. A reprint appeared in #68.

Comedy relief was in #12-32 in the form of Norge Benson. It was written by Olaf Bjorn(Kip Beales). Norge was accompanied by an assortment of "creatures". Jolie-a beautiful girl, Frosting-a big white bear, and Hatrack-a reindeer. Al Walker was to do some of his best art on this strip. After Walker, who did #12-19, we find Lily Renee, Jim Mooney and Fran Hopper (then called Fran Dietrich).

Between 8 and 15 one would find many extra features, "Don Granval", 8-11, "Capt. Nelson Cole", 8-14, "Spurt Hammond" 8-13, "Buzz Cranall 8-13, "Crash Corrigan" 8-16, "Cosmo Corrigan"9-11, and many one shots..


PLANET
comics
HUNT BOWMAN - STAR PIRATE - FLINT BAKER
AURO - MYSTA - FUTURA
ART by
MG -70

A HISTORY OF ACE PUBLICATIONS

Written by Raymond Miller

Art by Grass Green

Way back in the early 1950's I ran across an old beat up coverless comic which contained four costume heroes:Magno,Lash Lightning, The Unknown Soldier, and Captain Courageous. It wasn't till 1960 that I was to learn that this was a comic called 4-FAVORITES;a year later I found that these four characters also were in four other comics as well:Magno in SUPER-MYSTERY COMICS,Captain Courageous in BANNER COMICS, Lightning in LIGHTNING COMICS, and the Unknown Soldier in OUR FLAG COMICS. As time passed I learned more and more about the publisher and since, I have always been fascinated by the characters that were published by PERIODICAL HOUSE INC., better known as ACE MAGAZINES. Now it is time to tell you of them.

Also in SUPER-MYSTERY was the Black Spider,in reality District Attorney Ralph Nelson. D.A. Nelson was able to overcome the loopholes in the law by fighting criminals in his disguise as the Black Spider.Only his secretary, Penny Dodge, knew his secret. He lasted through 11 issues, though he never impressed me as being a first-rate character.

Two other characters also appeared in SUPER-MYSTERY COMICS: Vulcan and Buckskin. Vulcan was a direct descendant of the famous god of fire, and like the Human Torch he used his mastery over fire and heat to fight evil. The Fire-god was able to fly when he had his flame on,and although he was surrounded by a yellow flame, his body was never on fire like the Torch. Vulcan was born in the South Seas and because of his origin was the master of all fire and flame. The art in most of the stories was either by Maurice Gatwirth or Jack Alderman.Vulcan appeared in the first fourteen issues of SUPER-MYSTERY.

Buckskin was featured in issues #8-15 (except #11) of this comic. His alter-ego was that of Robert Blake, the young principal of a public school. The name was given to him because of his blue-dyed deerhide costume,which was like that of America's earliest defenders. Most of the stories were drawn by Harry Anderson and were very good.

One of the first titles from ACE was SUPER-MYSTERY COMICS, which was to last some 30 issues. Magno,their most popular hero,started in the first issue, dated June,1940. From what I have discovered on this hero he never had an origin story. Magno, the Magnetic Man, was the master of magnetism and was to appear in almost, if not all, issues of SUPER-MYSTERY. His young pal,Dave Davey, began his career in issue #4,Nov.,1940. Both were able to magnetise themselves to any metal object and then draw themselves to that object,even if it was miles away.Magno's most powerful enemy was The Clown.He appeared on and off during Magno's career,from the very early stories to the very last. Like most villains of that time he was able to escape at the end of the story. Magno and Davey also battled a snake-like Saboteur known as The Cobra. They first met him in S-M #10 (Vol. 2,#4) Oct., 1941,then battled him for the next three issues. The Master of Magnetism was at his best from the fifth issue to the twelth, when the art was done by Jim Mooney.Mooney also did the cover of these issues, which were all beautiful. After issue #12 the strip was done by many artists: H.C. Laugher, Harry Kurtzman, Feratadt, and Rudy Palais.

Other characters to appear in SUPER-MYSTERY over the years were Sky Smith, Q-13, Corporal Flint, Mark Murdock, Hap Hasard Paul Revere Jr.,Mr. Risk, Dr. Nemisis,Pee Wee Wilson,and the Sword.

SURE-FIRE COMICS #1 was also dated June 1940, and after three issues the title was changed to LIGHTNING COMICS.The leading hero in this comic was "Flash" Lightning,and he appeared in all thirteen issues. For the first seven or eight stories he was called "Flash", but he suddenly found himself with the name "Lash",and that's the one he was using as he walked off to Limboland. Like Magno, many of the stories were drawn by Jim Mooney. Mooney started doing the strip in #5, Feb.,1941, and continued through issue #12. Lightning's origin was in SURE-FIRE #1: he received his fantastic powers from the Old Man of the Pyramids in Egypt.Flash was able to fly and was the master of all the powers of electricity.In the first half dozen or so issues The Old Man of the Pyramids made brief appearances in the stories. Throughout the pages of SURE-FIRE/LIGHTNING Flash was to face and defeat such villains as the Eel, the Mummy, and the Mastermind.His partner,Lightning Girl,started her career in the last issue-#13,June,1942. Isobel Kane is given the power of Lightning in this final literary piece. The art was not by Mooney in #13;while it was colorful, it was not the best.

ACE even had its own Robin Hood type character, in the guise of the Raven. Alias Detective Sergeant Danny Dartin he was the scourge of criminals and a friend of the poor. Only two people knew his secret: Lola Leash, the daughter of the Chief of Police,and Danny's assistant, Mike. The Raven was always hounded by the Police, but never caught. His costume was all purple, except for the yellow and black Raven emblem.He was in all thirteen issues of LIGHTNING. In my opinion he was a much better character than the second-rate Black Spider.

Dr. Nemesis was another character from Ace who was drawn by Harry Anderson most of the time. He was in LIGHTNING #6-13 and was in reality Dr. James Bradley of the City Hospital.As Dr. Nemesis he would defeat criminals by using his remarkable invention on them: the infallable truth serum. Others in SURE-FIRE were Marvo the Magician, and his pet Monkey Tito, X- the Phantom Fed, Whis Wilson, Ace McCoy,Buck Steele, Hap Hazard, Congo Jack, Cappie Young, and in #13, the Sword.

Ace's third title was OUR FLAG COMICS. The date of #1 was Aug. 1941,and introduced the Unknown Soldier.He never did have an origin but he came on the scene with a bang. His first story was 16 pages long and he almost defeated the Nazis all by himself. Dressed in blue at first, he changed his colors to army brown in #2. Like Magno and Lightning, he had no secret identity.He was to appear in all 5 issues of OUR FLAG and on the cover of #1 and #4. The other costume hero in #1 was Capt. Victory, who was a lot like Captain Courageous, even to the extent of wearing a star shaped mask similar to Capt. C's. However, he lasted only one issue. Also in #1-6 were the Three Cheers, who were an ex-army nurse and her brothers,Bart and Boom.In #1 only,were Typhoon Tyson and Kay McKay, who was a real doll.

OUR FLAG #2 introduced a truly fine costume hero in the form of the Flag.If he wasn't the best Ace Character he sure was the most colorful in his brief four-issue stay. The origin was recorded as the following:Elderly John Courtney, known as 'Old Glory',was a crippled war veteran and flag-maker.One day (Flag Day to be exact) he finds a baby left on his doorstep.Upon examining the baby he discovers a birthmark of a flag on its chest; as it was Flag Day he is convinced that this is more than just a coincidence. 'Old Glory' raises the boy as his own and over the years he becomes quite a brilliant student as well as an outstanding athlete. On his 21st birthday Jim Courtney dreams he is taken up into space by the Spirits of '76. Up there he meets the great American patriots like Washington, Lincoln, etc. Washington tells him, "Your life was selected by us to perform hard and dangerous tasks." He then gives him the powers of 100 men, speed of the wind, and immunity from weapons. He acquires these powers by touching the birthmark of a flag.The origin story was 16 pages long and Flag appeared in two stories in #2-4, besides being on the cover of #2,3,and 5. Whenever he was flying stars seemed to flow in a streak left by him. Most of the first story deals with his battle at sea with the Nazis. He causes a tital wave that sinks the German ships. Most of the stories were drawn by Harry Anderson,though the origin wasn't.

Issue #5 of OUR FLAG introduced Mr. Risk, a non-costumed character who was to be around for years to come. What was he like? Well:"My business is to take chances you are afraid to take. Don't worry agout money. No fee. Phone Dangerfield 7-77777 and ask for Mr. Risk." Mr Risk had no sense of fear and was always looking for excitement and danger.He was always accompanied by his faithful assistant,Abdul.OUR FLAG is one of the hardest comics to find, so if you ever get one consider yourself lucky.

CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS

he come upon the Lost Tomb of King Arthur. Inside the grave he sees a large sword imbedded in a huge rock. On the stone is the legend about only one of pure heart will be able to remove the sword. And then flaming words appear on the wall: "Arthur Lake, you are the chosen one... take EXCALIBUR and use it in the cause of Liberty and Justice. Then, because your heart is pure, you shall have the strength of many times ten." Arthur leaves and later transfers the sword, Excalibur, and the stone onto a ship headed for America. Later, on board the ship, he hears that some spies plan to steal airplane plans. He goes to where the sword is and for the first time draws Excalibur from the stone; in a blinding flash Arthur Lake is gone and in his place stands the Sword. In the following pages he defeats the criminals and a villain known as the Black Master. When the sword was placed back into the rock the Sword once again became Arthur Lake.

After the July, 1942 issue of SUPER-MYSTERY, Ace discontinued publication of these 4 comics. The last issue of LIGHTNING was June, 1942; OUR FLAG, April, 1942; CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS, March, 1942. Only SUPER-MYSTERY was to come back. After five months, 3-M #15 Jan., 1943 marked the return of this comic. It featured Magno, Mr. Risk, Dr. Nemesis, Buckskin, Hap Hazard, Paul Revere, Jr., and

UNKNOWN SOLDIER

The fourth title and even harder to find than OUR FLAG is BANNER COMICS. It is almost impossible to even get any information on, too. BANNER featured Capt. Courageous, the Lone Warrior, Typhoon Tyson, and Paul Revere, Jr. Captain Courageous was Ace's #4 hero and I've never been able to find out if he had an origin or not. The Captain was able to fly and like most of Ace's characters had no secret identity. Many of his stories pitted him against his arch-enemy, Capt. Nippon. Nippon had only one hand, his other being replaced with a hook. Courageous was to last all six issues. BANNER was to last 5 issues and the last issue (#6) was called CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS.

Others in BANNER/CC were the Lone Warrior and Dicky, who were really Stan Carter and his younger brother, Richard. They were vaccinated with the elixir of power by their dying father who commanded them to devote their lives to fighting against evil.

Now in CAPT. COURAGEOUS #6 was Ace's last costume hero, the Sword. Arthur Lake, the son of an American aircraft manufacturer, had always been small and weak, although brave at heart. One day as he was out walking in England near an airfield he discovered an old cave. After exploring it

RAVEN

the Sword. With this issue, the Sword found a partner in the Lancer. Arthur Lake's friend is Lance Carter, whose father is killed in an explosion at the Lake Factory, and Art's father soon disappears. Both Art and Lance get out to find Arthur's father, but they are soon captured by Faye Morgana. (In the legend of King Arthur Morgana was Arthur's sister-in-law and also a noted sorceress.) Lake escapes and returns as the Sword only to be knocked out and captured by Morgana. She orders here men to remove the Sword's weapon from its sheath and kill him with it. However, they are unable to do so, and neither is Morgana. Lance then reaches for the Sword and as he feels it move there is a blinding flash of light and Lance Carter is now the Lancer. Together, the Sword and the Lancer defeat Morgana and her men. Later the Sword replaces Excalibur back into the rock and they once again become Art and Lance. They were to last till almost the end of SUPER-MYSTERY.

The fifth title, and the only one that did not cease publication during 1942, was FOUR FAVORITES COMICS. The first issue was dated Sept., 1941 and the original stars were Magno and Davey, "Lash" Lightning, the Raven, and Vulcan. With the fourth issue the Unknown Soldier replaced Vulcan and the following issue Captain Courageous replaced the Raven. From #5 through #20, the line-up

was to remain Magno, Lightning, Unknown Soldier, and Capt. Courageous. #30 was the last issue to contain the Unknown Soldier. He was replaced in #31 by the Unknown, a sort of Beatnik of Scotland Yard type of character (a character who appeared in PEP COMICS.), only the stories were really concerned with the supernatural. "Loch" Lightning's last appearance was in #32, he was replaced in #33 by Hap Hazard (Ugh!). Captain Courageous made it all the way to the end, but he discarded his costume and all his powers and became an ordinary marine, and therefore, an entirely different character. This happened in #33, #31 being his last appearance for the old Captain. Magno, the most popular of Ace's characters, didn't even make all 35 issues. His last story was in #36. His replacement was Hurry-up Harrigan (Good Grief). So the last two issues contained the Unknown, Capt. Courageous, Hap Hazard, and Hurry-up Harrigan, a far cry from the days of Magno, Lightning, the Unknown Soldier, the Flag, Raven, Black Spider, Vulcan, and the original Captain Courageous.

Ace published comics way into the 50's. Tho, all of these were of the horror and love types. But now, even these are gone... never again will we see the great heroes of Ace in action. the end

by Richard 'Grass Hoppa' Green

Hello out there! I suppose my story starts when I was four, and my mom dropped me on my head. From this slight concussion, my brain was damaged, so at the age of four-and-a-half I started drawing and have been doing so ever since.

However, that fall on my head only affected one half of my brain. Luckily, the other half remained normal, that I might have one other sensible ambition. Sensible and simply put: I plan to be the world's greatest entertainer!---Jerry L. and Sammy D. look out! I play piano, guitar, harmonica, tap dance, and sing, draw, write stories, songs, etc. Why heck, I can even read! (And there is nothing I like to read more than Marvel Comics, Alter Ego Masquerader, etc. (plug., plug!!))

Getting to particulars, though, I think I'd rather draw than entertain (even though at present I'm working on both), because after all, wasn't it my drawing-in-classes-not-paying - attention that caused me to go to high school five years rather than the normal two?...which lets you know how I was in arithmetic and math.

Seriously, I hope to become a pro artist within the next five or ten years. Funny? Not when you consider how hard it is now-days for amateurs to establish a name in the art field. But, that's what life is for: to plug away until you attain your goal(s), or come close to it.

Drawing for zines is fun and a great help. All the compliments are a great help to my poor ego, but believe it or not, it's justified or constructive criticism that I take stock in, because I want to improve, to be a good artist.

A salute to pro-eds and zine-eds for making this new age of comics! bye-bye!

Weird Science Foundations in FANTASY

The initial story in the first WEIRD SCIENCE featured the stock shrinking man-finding-new-worlds routine. At only a few spots did strong EC quality lines come out. In LOST IN THE MICROCOSM, a little philosophy occurred as the one professor who had doused himself with shrink-juice was found by his overwrought colleague. Quickly a gun was produced and doused to go with him. Forget that a spray shrinking both living and non-living, or any matter at all, for that matter, is incredibly absurd. Allow this and enjoy the accompanying line: "Here, take this gun, I've treated it with some of my formula. It will afford you some protection...and if need be, use it on yourself." The incredible shrinking prof did use it repeatedly as he passed thru Earth to an infinitesimal number of micro-worlds, finally dictating his yarn to an Earth prof of his own world. Then, he shrinks through the original chair he had squeezed into, and Earth's professor Dreeben resolves to "sleep the whole thing off." Quite a reaction from the old man. Unsensational ending #1.

Next in the virgin issue of WS came the fruit of one Wallace Horatio Wood, for the first time. He went on to do so much so well that he ce tainly must have had all the tools inherent in himself to understand and put out the EC effort. A lot of EC trademarks appeared in his DREAM OF DOOM in WS1.

A circle of time story, it saw use again and again afterward, ostensibly by Kamen, as he liked to dwell in ruts. But DREAM OF DOOM was a shining example of the type. Of a man who dozes from one ego form to another. Are they all consecutive dreams he is experiencing, or are they alter-existing realities he is slipping through? If dreams, when is he really awake? This yarn was the type that lifted the reader onto a confused plane of fantasy. If one paid heed, he couldn't help his sense of direction becoming paralyzed by one existence flip after the other. Also rewarding close scrutiny were such tidbits as the main character entering the editorial offices of "Gill Blaines" (EC's publisher was Bill Gaines) and being congratulated for his wonderfully fantastic drawings. To say that the fellow resembled Wood would be carrying things too far. But this depicted much as must really have happened to create WS #1, because the page of drawings which the character was showing (In this existence as a comics artist) was a replica of the very page of the story at that point. Excellent whimsy, and a ditty-bop they re-issued in later stories.. To bail out of the lapses into different identities, they wrapped the end of the story back to the beginning. Last panel the same as the first. A neat and easy way out.

But to show their understanding of the reader's quizzical reaction to this foul play, (they always tried to pre-guess the reader with their next panel) they ended the story with a defogging statement. All WAS just a game. The EC gentle consolation came warbling through: "And we leave Arnold Bristol and his dream dilemma. Or is Arnold really dreaming this? Maybe he isn't dreaming it at all; Could be that you, dear reader, are the one having the dream... could be that all this is going on in your imagination."

The Kamen story that followed showed that EC was not afraid to handle a sci-fi yarn liable to be gory without using gore. A simple chronology of problems, consequences, and choices of solutions made up the story, ungory. Some other horror comic line would probably have shown a lividly slavering scientist, his mind cells destroyed after fifteen minutes of death, torn to bits by hot cop lead at the last panel. Honest Al Feldstein did the wrap up of the issue, SEEDS FROM OUTER SPACE.

Enter the BUSH. Yes, for this first time EC founded one of its great strengths, which no other company ever mastered, the running gag character. You knew what it was all about after just one treatment.

The next time you saw him you winced and got ready. And you saw him again. And again...in the horror comics it was the three witches and their cackling idiocy. But the sci-fi mags had a prize all to themselves, The Bush. In the first four issues, WS8 and WS11, he made his monumental moves. And each time he was the Secretary of Defense, the cornerstone of our brain trust providing for national security. Each time he calculatedly ate up all the pertinent information about the dilemma at hand, deliberated with the coolness of a cat, then delivered his judgments as a knockout punch to the situation. In t the first issue he interviewed the emotional aide of Dr. Lane, whom she had witnessed being killed by a pack of three-eyed aliens. He decided cleverly after her testimony, "Miss Parker, I have reason to doubt your sanity."

"But I have proof," being the piece of alien metal she is holding.

"Ah," says Bush aide number one, instantly recognizing the stuff with his chemical molecular-analyzing eyes. "This is a piece of aluminum, sir! I think this girl has been fooling around near the proving ground!" (nasty harlot)

"Ah," says Bush aide number two, obviously the world's best instant psychiatrist, "According to all indications, sir, I should judge this girl as hopelessly insane!"

And now Bush, sensing the drama and immediacy of the situation, blurts out, "Take her to the mental hospital.

Exit hope for the world. But what about Bush? (Called this for the thick mop of hair he sported, parted down the middle) What style! What genius! What class! What an ass!

This first move of his establishes a talent to blunder from this point on. But at least in this yarn he has an excuse, we see, as the three leaders blink their third eyes at one another in approval.

At the end of the first issue was EC's request for letters. They cared how you cared for their stories, it seemed. Later came the famous letter columns which EC originated.

What about Bush in WS2 now? Here he is the male lead in the cover story. Another great performance by the cool one. The cover to WS2 is, of course, one of the early classics, the one showing reporters and a top USAF officer standing on the steps of the Capitol building. The brass assures that "Flying saucers are poppycock!" And, "The Air Force strongly denies the existence of flying saucers." Meanwhile, a weird, disc-shaped aircraft is winging overhead just as this is said, showing the soundness of the statement better than anything else could. But where does Bush fit in, we yearn to know. Well, the story inside, FLYING SAUCER INVASION, shows him once again figuring heavily at the climax. It is he who flauntingly discredits scores of observers, showing them as inflated windbags with a few parries of his slashing wit. He closes all saucer investigations. This means: WAR DEPARTMENT HAS DISPROVED THE EXISTENCE OF FLYING SAUCERS! (headlines for March 17, 1950) And on Sept. 3,1950, the giant 200 inch telescope at Mt. Palomar is put into operation and spots "Saucers." "Thousands of them!"

Bravo, Bush, one more time! But the saucer yarn was a tasty morsel of buffoonery even without Bush's masterful spot. There was Judson Latcher, a Wichita farmer, describing what he saw in the dark Kansas night.

"That's right...looked like a great big pie plate...spoutin'fire and smoke...all silvery...and goin' like blazes."

"From Hollywood, Lulu Parsnips reports... and, across the country, in New York, its "Droop Bearson, your newsboy, reporting."

The ultimate truth given to the nation seems to come as a public service from the BELL-CHARD advertising agency. "This country is "Pepso-seltzer" concious! The flying saucers are nothing but large pepso-seltzer tablets. An advertising stunt for ...ahem...our client." So we see, even at this early point, a bit of the EC greatness uncoiling. Wry humor is poked at conventional figures. The hippies were scooped by EC in downing the Establishment of lunatic habits. But EC didn't gibe bitterly. They used illustrative farces time and again to poke soft fun at our American symbols, the style King hippie, Timothy Leary himself, advocates and practices. This illustrates how effective the comic book format could be to form witty, aware, personalities out of youngsters. They could GET this stuff.

Wertham looked much too deeply into the pictures, finding hidden shadows with curves suggestive of a female's pulsing mammaries, or her flexed thighs, if it was really dirty. Or he looked at shock-gore out of context. The scenes he skipped in skimming is the valuable material, meant to be caught. The way these lines characterize the situation humorously is a precious ability EC had. But maybe Wertham did catch some of those gibes, and they burned him in a personal way. A few panels after Bell-Chard gets in its two bits, we're at "Fairview Psychopathic Clinic and Hospital"

A psychiatrist says: "The flying saucers are mass hysteria brought about by post-war insecurity and economic anxiety. It is obviously a pathological illusion brought about by continuous publicity given it by press, radio, and comic books. So EC predicted Wertham five years before the attacks which proved fatal. Tragic perspicacity.

In WS3 Bush rode again. Ever the competent Secretary of Defense, he rejects a scientist's theories that the impending first H-bomb detonation will cause a chain reaction of global grief; tidal waves and a recoil of the earth into an altered orbit leading to collision with the sun. Throwing the man's diagrams into the wastebasket, because they didn't make sense, Bush completes his power play. The H-bomb blows, and the earth goes. As for the EC kick to give a normal ending that abnormal flavor? The whole story is a lesson being taught to his class by a Martian teacher.

In WS4 the Droop Bearson type humor flowed again, in Feldstein's PANIC. Another commentary on man's enlightened behavior, the setting is a radio broadcast. Carson Walls (Orson Welles) moderates a historical replay of his show which earlier caused nation-wide panic. This time, heavily advertised, there is to be no panic, just entertainment.

"You'll get a wonderful Rooper rating, Carson. Everybody'll want to hear it!" He is convinced. So its brought to TV. Aliens appear, and their openers are the inevitable trademarks, "SPA FON...SQUA TRONT."

Cities are devastated on the silver screen to the delight of millions. The aliens run amok with space ships and death beams. Now authorities get phone calls for help, but they scoff at the reports of a space inva-

sion...till the NBS studios themselves are levelled. The sets go blank. ...FLASH to Washington...ENTER Secretary of Defense Bush. Helyells coolly, "Call the Air Force now!" But he is answered:

"I can't! The phones are dead."

Ah, so, another Bush league play! Earth is a Jupiterian colony by the last panel. That's show biz.

But the good secretary Bush has muscles he hasn't even used yet(like his brain). In #8 he engineers the destruction of a gigantic Venusian monster from his personal aircraft hovering over the destruction of New York. The alien's one water-linking tentacle is ordered cut off and the monster proceeds to shrivel up. Simple. Yeah Bush! But, meanwhile, the Bush cleverly left the bag of seed-pods from outer space from which grow these dandy beasts, on his desk. And the janitress, trusty government employee, was duty bound to throw them into the garbage can...which is incidentally headed out to sea. Bush is shocked, the first time we see his composure falter.

This yarn is a beautiful creation for other reasons than Bush's ability. For genius is the knack to draw something out of the ordinary humdrum scheme that is exotic. Good writing imparts newness to drab facts. (An example of the opposite to this is what you are reading now) In the SEEDS OF JUPITOR, WS8, EC and only EC could build a sci-fi story involving a sailor named Peach Pit, a sea-living Jupiterian monster, the secretary of Defense, and a cleaning woman. Add these characters to the drab fact that "the garbage disposal system for Washington D.C. is modern and efficient. Probably at this very moment along with tons of refuse, fifty small nut-like objects are being dumped overboard into the Potomac River from a garbage scow...to be carried out to sea.

Notworthy is the fact that the whole first three pages of the story were used to introduce the character PEACH PIT. He chews on peach pits because, "I like'm. Dey taste sho..." But suddenly a strange globe bursts open on the ship's deck. Things like peach pits scatter out of it. They are gathered to be sent to the lab, but one is left and a sailor beckons to PEACH PIT. "Here! You like to suck on 'em...Try this one...it's a Mongolian peach pit..." And good, old, simple PEACH PIT bites and swallows. (Anger wells up in you...they tricked the little fella.)

Then PEACH PIT'S stomach hurts; he starts to dehydrate; he shrivels horribly; his stomach is bloated; he meets death on the operating table. (Emotions seethe...he was a nice guy: simple but harmless. He didn't deserve to die.) An outlet for the emotions is needed, and it appears as a tentacled beast crawls from PEACH PIT'S open stomach. (DISGUST,,,hate that damn beast.)

EC did this often, introducing a simpleton, amusing, human interest buffoon like PEACH PIT to catch the reader's empathy. Then dish out unjust grief, and dump abuse on him to irritate the reader, get emotions running...POW! you're into the story.

In WS4 Kamen tried to illustrate this in I CREATED A GARGANTUA. Nice cute kid pays visit on prof. Prof explains new growth ray. Kid is a shorty; begs to be first human test. OK, but growth never stops, it turns out. Kid ends up living in Central Park, and filling it up. Press yells: TAXES FEEDING A FRANKENSTEIN! And yes, he is destroyed by the Navy in the ocean.

In WS11, Bush made his final move to be related in this article. ONLY HUMAN was the title. Here our man was in charge of a project to fill a computer with knowledge. Bush is bothered as the people programming the brain for long months allow emotions to seep into the machine. LOVE stymies it, and Bush bungles beautifully when he tells the computer to forget everything Mr. Harmon said...and, always obeying, it does.

EC came out against atomic weapons almost as strongly as it knocked mop-head in the early WS. In #3, DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH, #4, THE RADIOACTIVE CHILD, #6, SPAWN OF VENUS, are indictments of the use of atomic weaponry. (The desire for complete nuclear war bans current today, fifteen years later is significant.)

What about weird, strange monsters in the old WS? Amongst garden variety beasties, EC used amoeba-like creatures twice in the first twelve issues, and a gray vapor cloud once. They were monsters capable of dire death-dealing! In WS6, the chilling monster was an amoeba.

"Bullets won't stop it...it absorbed anything organic in its path!" When transported to Earth, both Bush and the good old reliable atom bomb were making guest appearances to save the day. Bush gave the word,, the bomb boomed, and the amoeba-like thing was blown to bits...thereby re-distributing all over the world. WS7 was a quick follow up. This time the amoeba was from the fourth dimension. In WS9, THE GRAY CLOUD OF DEATH, the vapor did in the spacemen sent to explore Venus. The gray cloud atmosphere was its caustic form.

Things little touched on up to this point are the stories of Kurtzman, Wood, and Kamen in particular. Each of these artists seems to have had a style of story given to him repeatedly through the early issues.

With Kamen and Wood, the time-circle yarns were repeated. THE MAN WHO WAS KILLED IN TIME (WS5,Kamen), SINKING OF THE TITANIC (WS6, Wood), WHY PAPA LEFT HOME (WS 11, Orlando) were all stories in which a person travelling in time corcled back to be involved critically in his own life

at another time. They aimed at a surprise end to clue you that this was indeed another circle of time. The surprise endings are craved by every reader who seeks thrills in our sci-fi bag.

Kamen seems to have been given to deader stories, probably in commemoration of his artwork. EXPERIMENT IN DEATH (WS 1), DIVIDE AND CONQUER (WS 6), SOMETHING MISSING (WS 7), and ONLY HUMAN(WS 11) come on like something warmed over. He also did many love triangle stories which were of debatable impact. Some of these were BEYOND REPAIR (WS 8), THE MARTIAN MONSTER (WS 9), REDUCING COSTS (WS 10), and ONLY HUMAN, mentioned above, in which a female robot was a cute angle in the triangle.

Kamen's problem was that he was hampered by a critical inability to draw. This was why he never handled a space yarn, and why his story abilities were limited. Truly, Kamen's forte was reliability. THE ETERNAL MAN (WS 3) may have been the best story he did in the first eleven issues simply because of the excellent writing. To me a story with little conflict, no killing, but coming over in the final effect softly and meaningfully is a worthwhile piece. This was one.

As for Kurtzman, the word here was offbeat. Way out..... whacko!

He started in WS 2 with THE MAN WHO RACED TIME. Right away his art stood out. Not fine line, not realistic, but caricature-type drawing; he had a strong penchant for depicting facial expressions. This first story pitted Bruce Dupont against demented scientist Julius Quantum, who, with his spacial accelerator, came to a sad end. Happy for Dupont.

In WS 3 Kurtzman went out on a limb with SOUNDS FROM ANOTHER WORLD, about a man who could hear plants scream when cut. End: an asylum, of course. (It was a funny story.) In WS 4 THE RADIOACTIVE KID showed a kid pervaded with atomic fallout turn into a genius and be used by a Latin American dictator as his entire brain trust. Wild and amusingly done, the kid reverted to an infant finally and the country fell. In WS 6 MAN AND SUPERMAN gave away a lesson:

> "You see, he was warned this
> is what happens to him that
> tries to be what he was not
> meant to be. This is, in
> fact, THE END."

Some classic bitswhich were the first early hints of the later MAD comic occurred in the first few panels as the background picture of sand kicked into a weakling's face was used. Meanwhile, in the foreground of the panel, the story line led elsewhere.

Kurtzman's last WS story, GREGORY HAD A MODEL T was the whackiest. It could be looked upon as ludicrous at first glance. But this is belittling some valuable tidbits in it. Lilting philosophy was heavy in this one. ("That car was Gregory's true love! The way it is with some people! They don't have anyone to love, and so they choose somethin', an animal or a machine... and they give their love to IT 'cause people HAVE to love! That's the way it was with Gregory!")

Now finally we come to the epic early art stories of Wally Wood. A discussion of the Wood hand-i-crafts boggles the imagination. There is much to be said, as Wood's art lifted the EC's to transcendentalism in spots.

From WS 5, when Wally Wood's art swelled into a thing of beauty (and the trademark border animals were introduced) through WS 6 (Man from earth's alter-evolved dawn returns to tell the scientists to flee their countries), WS 7 (THE ALIENS: Wood dealing with the possible misgivings when aliens meet and are not able to communicate), WS 8 (THE PROBERS: Wood commenting on vivisection), WS 9 (THE INVADERS: Wood saying life is worthless without freedom), WS 10 (THE MAIDENS CRIED: with rich Wood artwork flowing out of the panels), until WS 11 (the theft of a planet's atmosphere was the topic). Wood's talents were constantly expanding. His stories were the best, and in them WS 1-11, and EC in general reached its heights.

At it's serious best, EC didn't use science fiction just for science fiction"s sake. At times, especially under Wood, the stories reached more than other worlds, because the implications also reached inward. With Wood drawing a gizmo-packed rocket ship, or a weird and exotic alien terrain, the eager-beaver reader was sucked into the story; he couldn't help but be absorbed by the beautiful art.

In WS 9 (THE PROBERS) .vivisection and its moral implications were discussed. And in a comic book, yet. No space opera type yarn...no cosmic cops and robbers. At the end the Earth team was captured and penned up like the guinea pigs they had used and vivisected, just to see how those "lower forms of life functioned." Now the shoe is on the other foot.

Shocking? Yes. And the cause is the realization... realization of the contradictory life we live as the master race. For we have intellect and morality to suppesedly govern us... and mental subterfuge to cover up this intellect and morality when expedient to our ends. EC's best stories pulled aside emntal subterfuge and gave a clear glimpse of what high yet low animals we really are. A karma, or moral kernal was hidden within these yarns. A crushed, gushing rocket ship versus a butterfly. The contrast of beauty and tranquility with horror and chaos. Ego vs. alterego. Us vs. us.

A general EC pattern was: First, a few incidents drew you into the story, to

establish the identity which is desirable. Good old Peach pit, men working in cumbersome space suits to build a colony, a captain disheartened at the cutting up of guinea pigs. Then, when turned on by these bits, conflict came in to perk the senses. Simple fall-guy vs. tricksters, scientist vs. ship commander, earth party vs. alien terrain, that sort of thing. Interest was redoubled by the "hassle."

The conflict developed into some conclusion that was mind-boiling, the egotistic, selfish, and sensitive components of man's mind sticking out like a sore thumb. The characters were hit with the irony of things with the last few panels, as they were cut up like laboratory animals, used as receptacles for their alien wives' eggs, heated like worms in a jumping beans while hidden in a giant other-world seed pod.

Insight was provided. This was the power and the beauty. Simple step instructions in each story led to a better understanding of oneself. The stories didn't preach (as individual change must come from within), but as poet Burns might say it:

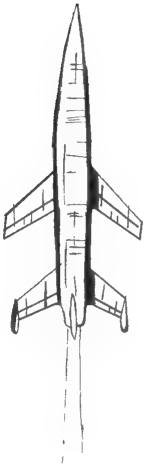
"O, Wad pow'r the EC gie us,
To see oursel's as others see us."

Some epics even went farther than to merely hold up a magnifying glass to our mental wrinkles...some of the more foreboding sagas projected the logical conclusion that we as acting masses with our God-damned mind-warpsmight be heading to. The universal answer, the atom bomb, was shown to be a mean mushroom messing up things royally. (DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH:WS 3 -- PANIC: WS 4).

And in a more complete developement, a tiny civilization was shown to evolve generation after generation in the space of a few days, nourished by a scientist, and left alone to evolve naturally, the thinking species decided ultimate holocaust was the only solution to their competition. On their small scale, blowing up their island was equivalent to us blowing up our planet. And they did it!

In RETURN (WS 5) Wood told us of the Earth's top scientists deciding to flee their insane countries in quest of peace in outer space. (In this story by Wood, Negroes appeared as top scientists indicating anti-prejudice-inclinations which blossomed into full stories later.

In WS 12-22, with the great art from the gifted hands of Wood, Williamson, Orlando, Crandall, Frazetta, and Evans, plus a new writer by the name of Bradbury, the Sci-fi EC's achieved a sort of comic Nirvana, a complete existence above ordinary comics. Next issue will probe these wondrous stories, so far above the cut of anything else, as we ponder THE ENLIGHTENED EC EPOCH. God love ya, Spa Foner's, till then!



EC CHECKLIST

HAUNT of FEAR (1950)

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CRYPT of TERROR (1950)

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TALES from the CRYPT
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VAULT of HORROR (1950)

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CRIME SUSPENSTORIES (1950)

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SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES (1952)

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WIERD SCIENCE (1950)

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WIERD FANTASY (1950)

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WIERD SCIENCE-FANTASY (1954)

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INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (1955)

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EXTRA

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TWO-FISTED TALES

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NEW
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FRONT-LINE COMBAT

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IMPACT

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ACES HIGH

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VALOR

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PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

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PANIC

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TALES CALL TO DRIVE YOU MAD

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EC "NEW TREND" COMICS

THE GHOST RIDER

by marc schooley

The Ghost Rider of the late '40's and early '50's was able to overcome such terrible dangers as wild Indians, hoards of outlaws, man-eating ants, and ingenious masterminds intent on killing him. But through it all, "he who rides the night winds" was able to overcome and see that justice triumphed over evil for years. In fact, one began to think that possibly the Ghost Rider really was invincible. However, what the above-mentioned evildoers weren't capable of doing, the demise of ME Publications was. The Ghost Rider had reversed his cape and disappeared, supposedly for all time. But in the true fashion of a ghost, some ten years later, the Ghost Rider returned from the dead. Dick Ayers, who created and, to my knowledge, drew every Ghost Rider strip published, was again doing the honors as the "NEW" G.R. appeared. There was real excitement for those of us who remembered the Ghost Rider, but it was short-lived. The comic that reappeared after all these years was an imitation; it wasn't the Ghost Rider at all. Instead, there was a man named Carter Slade in G.R.'s costume. He was three times as large and muscular as was Rex Fury, the original Ghost Rider. Instead of the eerie and spine-chilling effect, we got a typical super hero vs. super villain affect. What actually had happened was that "Spiderman had gone west."

For those who are not familiar with the original Ghost Rider, he appeared during the late '40's and early '50's in Tim Holt Comics, Best of the West, Great Western, B Bar G, and, of course, Ghost Rider Comics. As I mentioned earlier, Dick Ayers was the brainchild and artist for G.R. Evidently, Ayers really liked the character, because he did all the art and scripts, with the exception of a few covers which Frank Frazetta did an outstanding job on. Because of Ayers apparent feeling for G.R., I was quite surprised to see him let Marvel Comics completely change the character and format of GHOST RIDER COMICS when they revived him.

The only resemblance at all between the two Ghost Riders is the costume. The difference in the two can readily be seen in the origin issues. In the original GHOST RIDER #1, Rex Fury, U.S. Marshal, and his companion, Sing Song, are heading for town in a wagon when they are attacked by renegade white men masquerading as Indians. They are thrown into a raging stream of water and are finally washed to shore in an underground cave. As they lay there on the "borderline between life and death," Rex Fury is approached by Wild Bill Hickock (who is dead). Hickock explains that Fury is between the living and the dead, and for that reason he can go and meet people like Pat Garrett, Kit Carson, and Calamity Jane. Hickock then says "Many of the men and women who tried to make the West safe for the homemakers are dead, but banditry and outlawry still flourish! We want to help in the only way we can--by passing on our knowledge to one who can do what we cannot"--and that they do! Each of the western heroes teaches Rex Fury their individual skills until he has mastered them all. He then goes after a horse; he finds a beautiful, white stallion which he captures and names Spectre.

After all this happens, the scene shifts to the cave where Rex and Sing Song have just awakened. Rex explains to Sing Song what has happened and they come to the conclusion that he has only dreamed it; but as they walk out of the cave, Spectre is standing there. Thus began the illustrious career of the Ghost Rider.

So, the cast of characters you are given are Rex Fury, Sing Song, and

Spectre. In Marvel's rendition of G.R., not one of these characters is to be found. The Marvel interpretation has Carter Slade, a school teacher, riding west from Ohio. He comes upon renegade whites, masquerading as Indians, burning down a farm house and killing the settlers in it. Carter pulls his rifle and rides to the rescue, as he remarks: "I didn't learn to shoot in college, but now I've got to try." One of the 'Indians' knocks him from his horse, where upon he goes about knocking out four of them with his fists. Finally, one of the 'bad' guys shoots him in the back, then another one shoots him to make sure he's dead. At this point, another permanent member of the cast comes out of a trap door of the burning house; his name is Jamie Jacobs, son of the dead settlers. He sees Slade is still alive but must have help quickly, so he puts Slade on a horse and tries to lead him to town. But as fate would have it, he gets lost and is found by real indians; their witch doctor, Flaming Star, goes about his rituals to save him. Just as they have given up all hope Carter gets up and with the exception of being a little dizzy, is in perfect condition. Flaming Star explains how he talked to the gods and they said they would send a great champion. And, ready or not, Carter Slade was it. The witch doctor told him he needed a 'ghost horse' and took him to a herd led by a great white stallion. Naturally, after the indians have failed, Slade captures the stallion and names him Banshee. And thus starts the not-so-illustrious career of the 2nd Ghost Rider.

I don't think anyone would sound ridiculous by saying that neither of the two origins are very believable. The difference, however, is that neither in the original G.R., the origin isn't necessarily supposed to be believed. The main thing is to form the identity of the Ghost Rider and get him out on the plains fighting evil. In the Marvel version, they go to great pains to make you think that possibly this man, with two bullets in him, is actually called from the dead by a howling witch doctor to become a ghost-type god. Then, of course, they gave him a typical Marvel recipe of the love triangle, the overall problems of a man who is a super hero, and, of course, the problem of the law thinking he is a criminal. And he was furnished with super-villains in continuing roles.

The original Ghost Rider would probably turn over in his grave (I had to do it) if he could see what Marvel has done to him. In the first place, there was no love for Rex Fury. ; the main reason for this was because he just didn't have time. Secondly, the only problem he had being a super hero was that he never got to sleep. By day he was a U.S. Marshal and by night he rode the night winds. Thirdly, the law never considered G.R. an outlaw, because it was known that evil-doers would face justice at his hands. Another reason, of course, was that people (the law included) weren't sure that he wasn't really a ghost. Finally, no villain G.R. faced ever came back for more. Usually, at the end of the story, the criminal would be killed by G.R., kill himself accidently while trying to flee, or give himself up to the sheriff while babbling that he would rather hand than fight a ghost. In other words, when the Ghost Rider finished with them, the villains were through.

The art in the original GHOST RIDER COMICS was excellent; the actual drawing of the characters' faces was perhaps not as realistic as the Ayers work of today, but the overall effect and atmosphere of horror was there. THIS, of course, fit perfectly with the crisp dialogue the Ghost Rider had with the villains. One of the better examples of how G.R. fought for justice is in the story "Black Bart Returns" from GHOST RIDER COMICS #9, 1952. Black Bart was a viscious killer and thief who was brought to trial and condemned to hang. As he is being hung, the town is set afire, and the people flee to fight the flames. When they return the rope is cut in half and Bart is gone. They know he should be dead because he was hanging when they left him. Shortly afterwords, he returns to rob and kill even more. He still has the rope around his neck and his face is as white as death. He doesn't speak at all and while robbing a stagecoach, a woman stabs him with a long hatpin; not only does he not scream out in pain, but he doesn't even bleed. So, surely the man must be dead, and "soon the territory is locked in a vice of fear." Marshal Rex Fury comes to the territory to see what he can do. As he is talking to the sheriff, Black Bart strikes! Rex goes after him, but while giving chase, his horse hits a hole and throws him. Rex has to be taken to a doctor to have his head bandaged. While in the doctor's office, he meets the doctor's nephew, Edmund Haycox. It is evident from the way he is drawn that he is villainous. As he bandage's Rex's head, he puts a doped tarantula in the bandage. The warmth of Fury's body will supposedly awaken the spider and "good-bye Rex Fury." As fate would have it, Rex sees Haycox taking the spider from the jar, and, as he leaves the doctor's office, he takes it out of the bandage and fakes death in the street. It then becomes a job for Ghost Rider. That night G.R. follows Haycox to an abandoned mine shaft. He watches him hypnotize Bart with a lantern. G.R. shoots the lantern out and then exclaims, "Stop, evil hypotist! I have passed through the jaws of death to unmask you and your evil minion! You set the fire the night of the hanging, villain! You cut Black Bart down after everyone had fled. Then you kept the still-living scoundrel prisoner, hypnotizing him and sending him forth on evil missions for your gain...Black Bart does not bleed when stuck by hat pins because such is the reaction of subjects of hypnotism!" While G.R. is making that speech Haycox grabs a jar of tarantulas and throws them at Ghost Rider; but G.R. knocks them away with his whip. Bart pulls a gun, but he's not fast

enough, because G.R. draws and kills him. But Bart does get off a wild shot that knocks several jars of tarantulas from a shelf, which naturally sets the spiders free, and, of course, they all land on Haycox. The next-to-the-last panel shows Edmund Haycox in mortal pain with three giant tarantulas on his face. The last panel has a silhouette of the G.R. looking at the mine shaft and saying, "Killed...both of them...by the master villain's hairy pets.... I'll seal the shaft's entrance and head back to town to assure the good people that Black Bart will return no more!"

I hope that gives you an idea of the type of story-lines prevalent in GHOST RIDER COMICS. However, it's actually the combination of the eerie, EC-type artwork, the storylne, and G.R.'s dialogue that made him such an excellent character.

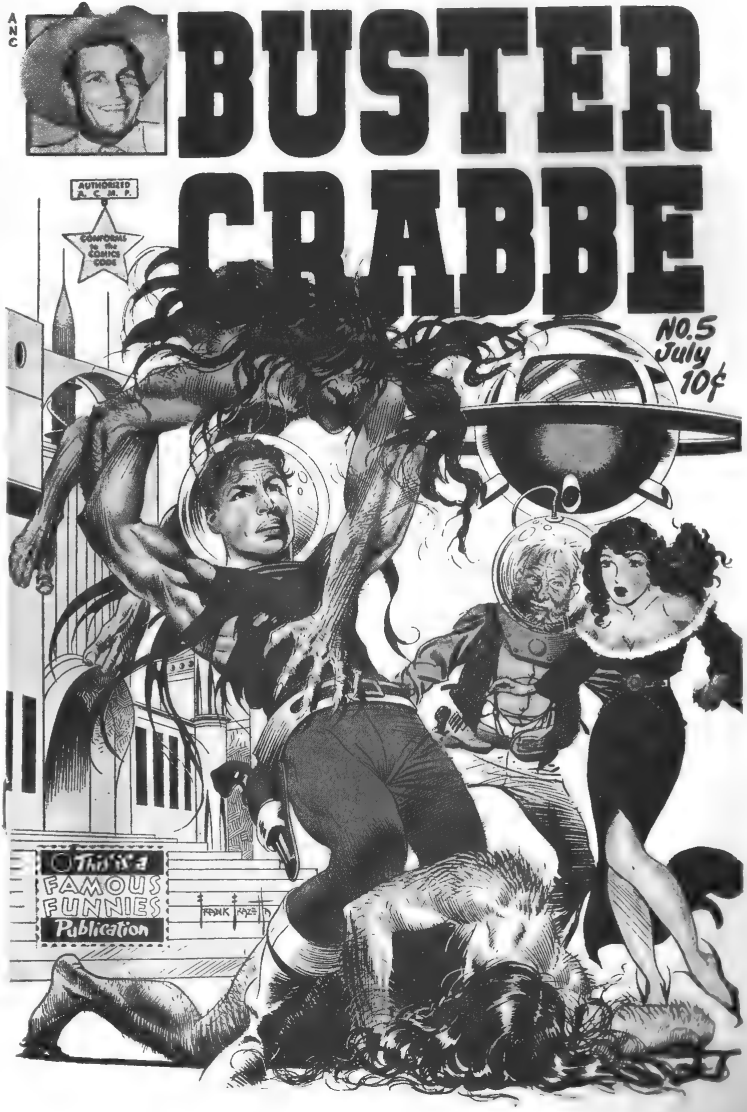
It is really sad that most of the younger comic enthusiasts know the Ghost Rider only as a neurotic Marvel super hero, instead of the truly magnificent upholder of justice that he originally was.

(Reprinted from HCCAN vol. 1, no. 6)

From GHOST RIDER COMICS #1

the GHOST RIDER
THIS IS THE TALE OF THE GHOST RIDER—
A MAN BORN TO THE WEST! A MAN WHO HATES EVIL AND THE DEATHS AND ROBBERIES AND LOOTINGS THAT THE BANDITS AND OUTLAWS OF THE OLD WEST LEFT IN THEIR RUTHLESS PATH! A MAN TRAINED BY THE GHOSTLY HANDS OF THE MEN WHO MADE THE WEST SAFE, AND WHO GAVE THEIR OWN LIVES THAT OTHER MEN MIGHT LIVE!
WILD BILL HICKOK... PAT GARRETT WHO KILLED BILLY THE KID... CALAMITY JANE... KIT CARSON, WHO KNEW THE INDIANS AND THEIR WAYS...
THIS, THEN, IS THE STORY OF HOW THE GHOST RIDER WAS BORN AND GREW, UNTIL THE LEGENDS OF HIM IN THE NIGHTS AROUND THE LONELY CAMP-FIRES SWEPT LIKE A COLD BREEZE DOWN THE SPINES OF THOSE WHO FEARED THE LAW...
DICK AYERS
IT ALL BEGAN WHEN A BAND OF APACHES LED BY A WHITE MAN DISGUISED AS AN INDIAN, RAIDED THE LITTLE TRAVELLING STORE RUN BY A MAN NAMED REX FURY AND KNOWN AS "THE CALICO KID".
LOOKS BAD, SING SONG!
THEY HAVE US SURROUNDED! ONE MORE CHARGE AND THEY'LL RUN RIGHT OVER US...

FRAZETTA.....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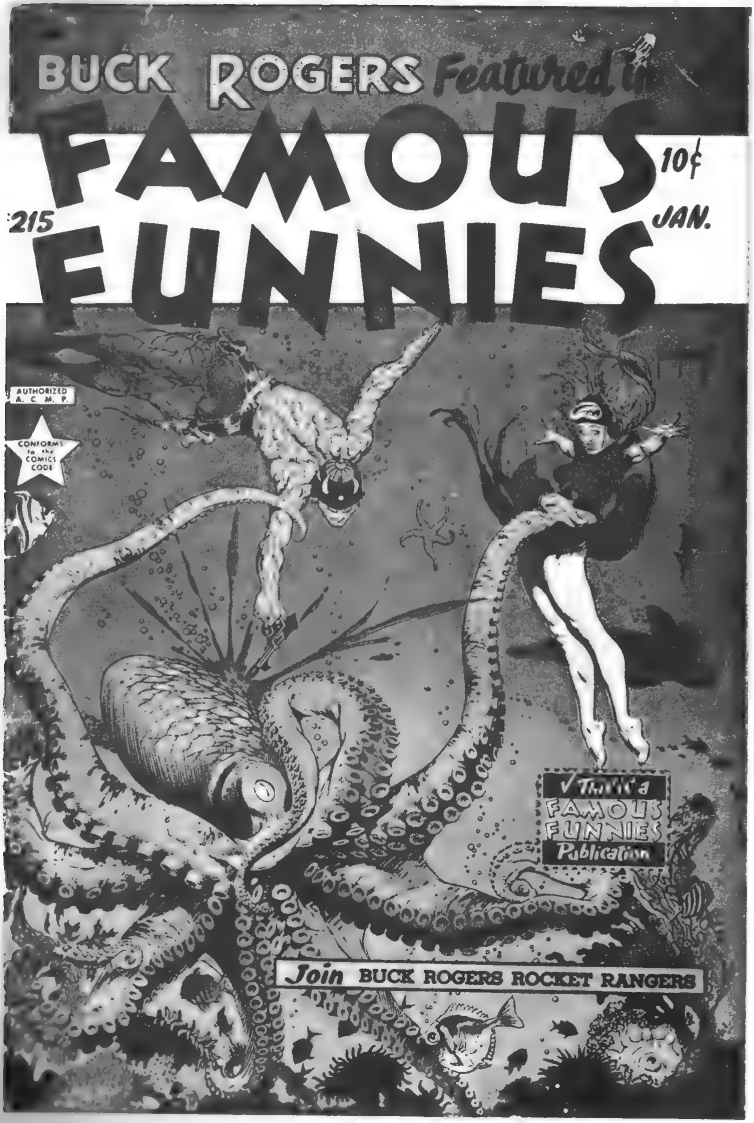
FRANK FRAZETTA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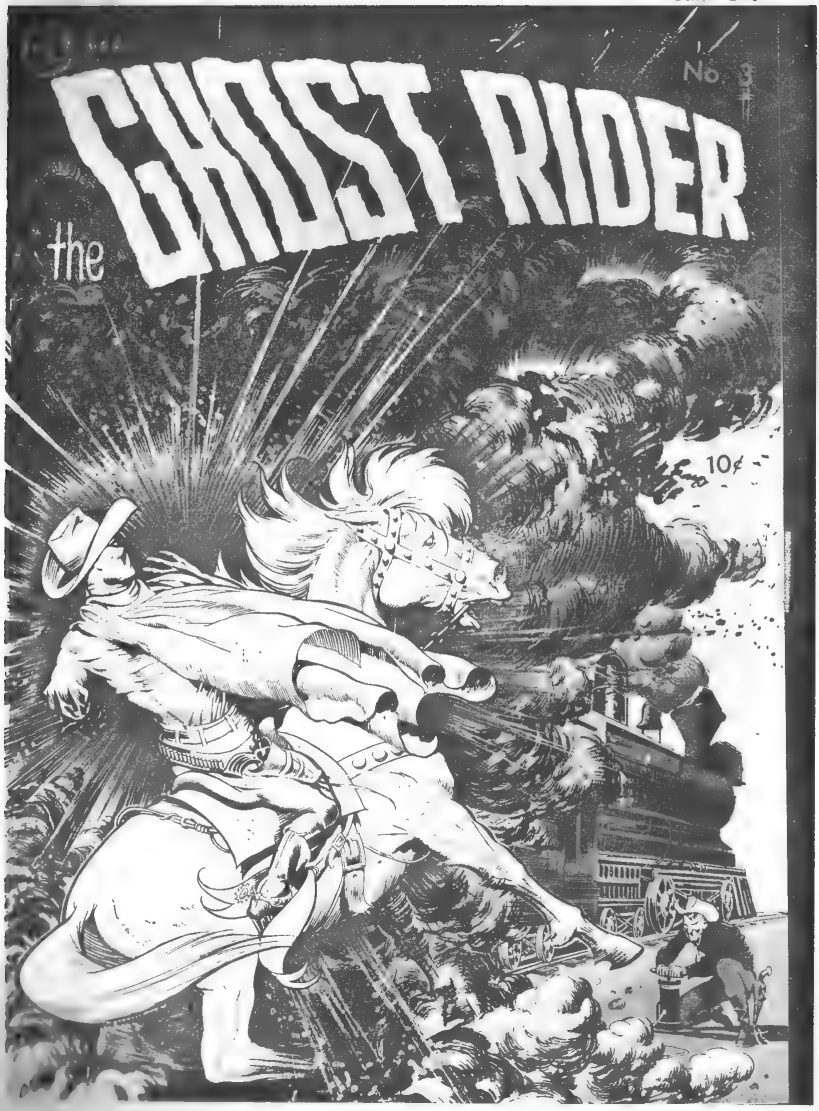
the GHOST RIDER
No 3
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ME
THUNDA
No 1

AN ENTERTAINING EC COMIC

Joe Orlando

Art and Article
by
BOB COSGROVE & MARTIN L. GREIM

JOE ORLANDO was born in Bari, Italy on April 4th, 1927. Probably Joe's parents, who migrated to the United States just two years later, little suspected that their son was to become one of the most respected artists and idea-men in the comic art world. They did start him on the right track" tho', if unintentionally, by settling in New York City, the Vatican of the comics.

Like most artists, Joe began to show his talents at an early age, picking up pen, brush, and more often crayon to become the local DaVinci of his grade school. A veteran of Santa Claus sketches and assembly posters, at nine years old, jolting Joe enrolled in some art classes offered by his neighborhood Boy's Club.

Like so many other top cartoonists in today's comics scene, Joe attended the High School of Industrial Arts, where he studied Illustration. It was here that Joe first met as classmates, many of the people that were to become his future colleagues. After completing high school, Orlando fell victim to the draft and served his time in the Occupation Army of Europe. Army life had its compensations though, for upon returning to the USA, Joe wasted no time in taking advantage of the G.I. bill, which made it possible for him to attend the Art Students League. In addition, the bill gave Joe the opportunity to attend classes with the noted illustrator Frank Riley, who Joe considers very influential in his own unique approach to comic art.

It was at this time that Joe began doing freelance work for various comic books, notably illoing "Chuck White" for Treasure Chest comics. As Joe's freelance career snowballed, he had the good fortune to become acquainted with famed illustrator Wallace Wood, and soon began working with him. Joe generally assisted with inking and background work, sharing Wood's studio above a Spanish Dance Club.

At this point however, a black page appeared in Joe's illustrating carreer. Disheartened by a bad experience with an unscrupulous publisher, the disappointed Orlando abandoned comic books in favor of a job as a stock clerk.

Luckilly, Joe relented and soon began slaving over the Wood drawing board once again. Initially, Joe and Wally worked for the Avon Comics group. Most of their efforts were "Avon Fantasy Classics," such as "An Earthman on Venus" and "Space Detective." One of their better productions was "The Mask of Fu Manchu," based, of course, on Sax Rohmer's mysterious oriental archvillain, and featuring such Rohmer characters as Sir Denis Nayland Smith. The ruler of a gigantic secret organization known as the Si-Faan, the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu attempted to steal the mask of "El Kokanna" and a sacred sword. His purpose? To seize control of a fanatic horde--another step designed to give him mastery of the world.

Within the same year or so, the Orlando-Wood team also turned out "Captain Science" for Youthful Magazines. "Captain Science" was in reality Gordon Dane, who remained in his earth laboratory in 1950 for all of three panels in any given story, before zipping into outer space with his kid assistant Rip, and his girlfriend, Luana.

How much of the work was Orlando's, and how much was Wood's, only Joe and Wally know for sure. One thing is sure, however, to even the most casual observor of their early work--the style is very much Wally Wood's, Though not the Wally Wood we know today. Although very, very good, the Wood-Orlando art does not display the tremendous brush technique that is today evident in every Wood-overseen job. The composition is excellent, but somewhat cluttered. The figures, showing both Orlando and Wood influences, and in many cases "stock" Wood poses of today, show an almost subliminal Alex Raymond influence, and the influence of Reed Crandall upon Wood's art is very, very, apparent. While beautiful work, both the Avon and the Youthful efforts were hints of the stylistic mastery yet to come.

And come it did, beginning with the duo's dynamic drawings for the highly respected Entertainment Comics (EC) group, where Wally and Joe worked on just about all the EC books, from horror comics to the new direction VALOR. Here, the inking technique, while never as good as today, became sharper, and the detail became greater even tho' paradoxically, the clutter began to swiftly disappear. Dramatic lighting was a key factor in the elegance and style of the Wood work.

As EC began growing, however, more artists of top caliber were necessary. Even though it meant losing a capable assistant, Wood recommended Joe as the man for the job. It was as a regular EC staffer that Joe finally settled down and got married. His wife, Gloria, still works with the "remnant" of EC, as head of Mad Magazine's stalwart subscription department.

FROM EC TO DC

SUPERMAN • DC • NATIONAL COMICS

Joe's early solo work at EC is extremely similar to that of Wood's, although not as fantastically detailed as Wood's has now grown. The facial expressions--the inking technique--the composition of the panels--and especially the construction of the figures and treatment of clothes--all were Wally Woodish.

Orlando had learned much from Wood, but he was too much of an individualist to slavishly copy. Soon his inking style softened and became freer--his figures began to lose that carved out, solid look so evident in Wood's work. Faces elongated, and the treatment of mouths changed especially. Joe was fast becoming the individual stylist he is today.

Like his friend and colleague, Joe's first love was EC's pace setting science fiction tales. Pace-setting is truly the word for one story in particular, "Judgement Day". "Judgement Day" was the story of Cybrinia, a world of robots, which was to serve as a "test case." Originally, men had placed a handful of robots there to see if they would develop into a civilization worthy of inclusion in the existing Galactic Empire. On the surface, the robots had done well, reaching a 20th century level civilization. But beneath the surface, lay a social conflict between orange robots and blue robots. In effect, a robot-guised attack on racial discrimination. In 1953, the story was tragically behind the times as they should have been, but to EC's everlasting credit, far ahead of the times as they truly were.

Although equally adept at depicting any type of SF tale, many of Joe's stories were adaptations of the work of top science-fiction writers. Like such greats as Al Williamson and Wally Wood (Will you ever forget Wood's "There Will Come Soft Rains?), Joe adapted several stories from the patron saint of EC's SF line, Ray Bradbury. Two of his best Bradbury adaptations, "The Long Years," and "Outcast of the Stars," were reprinted in TOMORROW MIDNIGHT, a Ballentine paperback featuring EC adaptations of stories from Bradbury's works--notably his very famous MARTIAN CHRONICILES.

In the last 3 issues of WIERD SCIENCE FANTASY (before it became INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION), Joe created some of his most memorable work for EC--an adaptation of Otto Binder's "Adam Link-Robot", an excellent novel of historical importance in the Science Fiction field. The story of Adam Link was the story of a metal man of bolts and wires, far more human than many of his flesh and blood colleagues. When an accident caused the death of his creator and friend, the robot that could think like a man found himself accused of murder. Inevitably, people assumed he was a Frankenstein. Fortunatly however, people like Jack Hall, reporter, and Thomas Link, lawyer and nephew of Adam's inventor, were on hand to prevent the rest of humanity from making a tragic mistake.

In this early, superbly illustrated version of Adam, Joe Orlando created a sensetive portrayal of the human robot. The one flaw, however, was the elongated head he endowed Adam with, which tended to hinder the portrayal of Adam's human emotions.

But, because the world is an imperfect world, all good times DO come to an end, and all good things eventually meet destruction. So it was with what many people consider to be the finest comics group that has ever existed. In 1955, crushed by censorship, EC died. The talent that made it the company that it was, split up--some going to work for other companies, some freelancing, others going into more profitable realms of art.

Joe Orlando chose to return to the world of the freelance artist. Avon was gone, but the field was still ripe for talent. Over at Classics Illustrated, Orlando produced several stories, notably "The Tale of Two Cities," and "Julius Caesar."

Another market quick to capitalize on Joe's titantic talents was The Atlas Comic Group, forerunner of today's highly celebrated Marvel Comics Group. Recognizing Joe's flair for fantasy and Science-Fiction, Atlas lost no time in assigning him to their wide range of fantasy titles, including MYSTIC, WORLD OF FANTASY, ASTONISHING, and MARVEL TALES.

Joe's work during his stay at Atlas is extremely interesting. In some cases, his art bears a strong resemblence to that of his EC period. In other stories, Joe seems to be experimenting with his style, while in still other stories, the art is extremely similar to Joe's contemporary work. All of the Atlas stories were very well done. In them, Joe demonstrates exceptional skill in silhouette work and the portrayal of furniture. A good example of this is "Deadlock!" in WORLD OF FANTASY #14.

Flatwise, Joe's script material left something to be desired. Unlike such claims as "A MYSTERY TALE to hold you Breathless," the stories proved a quick cure for insomnia, with rather predictable plots. Most dealt with the misuse of some amazing scientific invention or discovery.

In addition to his work with Atlas, Joe began doing more and more work with MAD Magazine. Joe's work at MAD is unfortunately not representative of the type of work he is capable of. Usually, his art is hampered by very poor material, of the type that has caused many to bemoan the decline of the magazine. His recent work illustrates this admirably. Joe has been stuck with "MAD Interviews...so and so, etc," a feature that at best qualifys as mildly humorous. Worse still has been his assignment to "Magazines for Special Professions," such as "Free-Loader Magazine," which certainly qualifies as one of the most humorless humor features ever to appear on the printed page.

At the same time, Joe also tried his hand at some advertising work, including a booklet on vitamins assisted by another EC artist, Roy G. Krenkel, well known to many EBB readers for his illustrations for Ace's EAB Martian series.

Around 1964, Warren Publications decided to venture into the comic publishing business. Warren, however created a comic book with a difference--CREEPY MAGAZINE, a slick cover, 35¢, black and white magazine, dealing with horror and using improved methods of reproduction, allowing wash and other varied special effects. This exciting company attracted some of two top names in the business--Frazetta, Colan, Crandall, Ditko, Maestroserio, Morrow, Torres, Craig, Severin, Williamson, and Wood, to name a few. One of the first people contracted was Joe Orlando, who in addition to contributing story ideas, turned out some very fine art, utilizing both wash and line drawing.

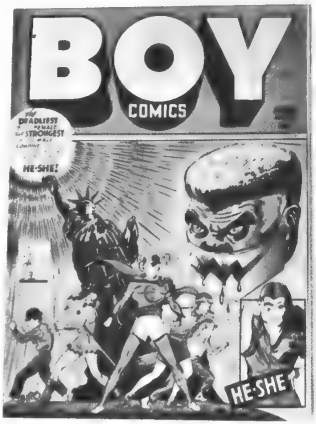
Exceptionally well drawn horror stories (and one or two poorer efforts) marked Joe's stay at Warren. "Return Trip!", in CREEPY #3 is an excellent example of Joe's outstanding draftsmanship. "Vampire Slayer!", in EERIE #5 (CREEPY'S companion magazine.) is a dramatic testimonial to Joe's creativity in layout and design.

The real "treat" involved in Joe's reunion with an EC-style horror mag, however, was his reunion-- and comicdom's--with another old friend, ADAM LINK, a pleasure heightened by Otto Binder's script adaptation from his original story. Here was Adam, once again, done entirely in a style uniquely Orlando's. And this time, Joe corrected his previous error, giving Adam a more human shaped face, while still retaining enough of a mechanical quality to give Adam a certain aloofness. Fortunatly, Adam's second stay in comics proved more enduring than the last, and his adventures, illoed by Joe Orlando, continued on a semi-regular basis until the departure of Archie Goodwin as WARREN'S editor. Fans of Adam are hoping that in the near future, Warren will see fit to reinstate the series. The artist? Joe Orlando, of course!

While Stan Lee was still ushering in the Marvel Age of Comics, Marvel had ushered in a new character, DAREDEVIL by name. In his first issue, under the fine artistry of that old stylist, Bill Everett, DD got off to a flying start. Unfortunatly however, Everett was unable to continue the feature, which fell into the waiting hands of Joe Orlando. Joe's art on this feature was excellent. For three issues, Daredevil battled Electro, the Purple Man, and the OWL. In addition to worthy portrayals of these menaces, Joe turned in a very fine portrayal of the Fantastic Four. Unfortunatly, the one character he didn't turn out a fine portrayal of was Daredevil himself! Why? Who can say. No one, including Joe's old buddy Wally Wood, seemed able to draw DD's seemingly simple costume with the same charm that Everett could. When Wally took the feature over, he finally gave up and redesigned DD's costume completely. Then again, part of the responsibility may lie with Joe's inker on the feature, Vince Colleta.

With issue #62 of Showcase, Joe Orlando turned up at DC. This was the origin issue of DC's humor magazine "The Inferior Five". Though in later issues the art went downhill, Joe Orlando's version, in the first issue, was outstanding. His portrayal of The Inferior Five vs. Dr. Gruesome, although humorous, also had a quality about it reminiscent of the action heroes of the '40's - dark shading and abreviated backgrounds.

At any rate, with Carmine Infantino's promotion to Editorial Director of NPP, Orlando became an editor, where he brings the same talent and skill to the titles he edits, as he does to his art. Joe's fans can only hope that in addition to his editorial chores at DC, the multi-talented Mr. Orlando will find time to do some comic strips as well.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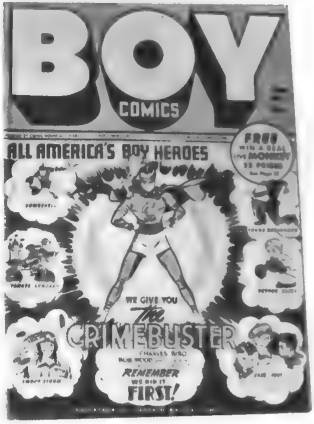
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The NEW TREND

AN ENTERTAINING EC COMIC

by ED LAHMANN

In the Feb.-Mar. issue (#16) of E.C.'s comic book titled CRIME PATROL there appeared a feature called 'The Crypt of Terror ' . This story was a horror type effort with the O'Henry style of twist or snap finish. The story was so popular that with issue #17 the title of CRIME PATROL was changed to THE CRYPT OF TERROR.

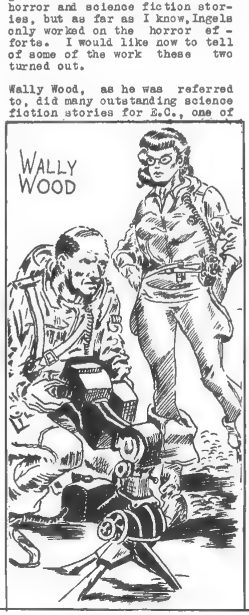
The cover was by an outstanding artist by the name of Johnny Craig and it was to set the standard for all the art that followed in the E.C. magazines. The cover depicted a young woman walking down a deserted street with a cat clawing through some nearby trash barrels. A lonely streetlight lit the corner the girl was approaching. On the sidewalk was a newspaper with the headline, "Werewolf Strikes Again" while peering from behind the corner was a wolfish looking man to complete the effect.

The success of this book was fabulous and E.C. was off and running.The need for other titles to satisfy the market was now a must. THE CRYPT OF TERROR was soon followed by THE HAUNT OF FEAR and THE VAULT OF HORROR.All of these magazines carried the same type of fare, illustrated horror/suspense stories with the snap ending. By now E.C. was beginning to mature.Two new titles were added that had stories of an altogether different nature: science fiction stories with very thought provoking themes, but still retaining the unexpected finish.

These E.C. Comics were published by the FABLES PUBLISHING COMPANY and edited by William M. Gaines, whose father,M.C. Gaines,is generally recognized as the father of the comic book.

The two leading artists at E.C. at this time were Johnny Craig and Albert Feldstein. They both did most of the cover work and several of the inside stories. Two other artists at E.C. were, however, beginning to come into their own. I'm speaking of Wallace Allen Wood and Grahame Ingels. Wood did art on both the horror and science fiction stories, but as far as I know,Ingels only worked on the horror efforts. I would like now to tell of some of the work these two turned out.

Wally Wood, as he was referred to, did many outstanding science fiction stories for E.C., one of



which was in WEIRD FANTASY #8 , Jul.-Aug.,1951. 'The Enemies of the Colony' was its title and it dealt with the theme of an overbalance in nature and propagation of species.His art,as usual, was great in this story, but the writing was superb, probably one of his best works.

The following issue of WEIRD FANTASY featured a story by Wood that had perhaps his greatest art, and for the tremendous type of work that Wally did, this is saying a lot. The story was titled 'Spawn of Mars' and was in substance a love story: a love story of a hideous martian and his love of an earth girl,who is a member of an exploration team from earth to Mars. The Martian takes the place of one of the men in the party and by use of a hypnotic veil hides his appearance. The Martian marries the girl and when he tells her what has happened,she thinks his mind has snapped.The Martian is killed in an auto crash and his hypnotic veil is lost. The girl is aghast at seeing the revolting creature and collapses.Later at the hospital she learns she is going to have a baby. Of course, the gist of the matter is:what is the baby going to look like? A good story with beautiful art.

Another story by Wally Wood based on this idea was in WEIRD FANTASY #8 entitled simply , 'Breakdown'. Some of Wood's best efforts in the horror field were 'Horror in the Freak Tent',HAUNT OF FEAR #5; 'Faced with Horror', CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #3; and 'Death's Double Cross' in CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #1, although these last two were not necessarily straight horror. In my opinion, Wood was the best artist at E.C. with Ingels a close second. And now would be a good time to reflect upon some of the latter's efforts.

Ingels did The Witches Cauldron stories in the three horror mags and later in CRIME SUSPENSTORIES. One of his best was 'The Hunchback' in THE HAUNT OF FEAR #4. 'The Ventriloquist's Dummy' in TALES FROM THE CRYPT #28 was another very good one. The two stories both had the same basic idea, human mutation in the form of two minds in control of the same body.

I think Ingels greatest story was in THE VAULT OF HORROR #18 entitled 'Dying to Lose Weight'. Ingels had a style all of his own, whereas Wood's style was similar to others such as Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, Burne Hogarth and a few more. He was very adept at the macrabre and somber. The scene on this page is from his story in TALES FROM THE CRYPT #20, 'Re-Death'. Notice the shading and the light direction plus the facial expression of the figures. This was another of his very strong points.

Other stories of note by Ingels were 'Death Suited Him', 'A Biting Finish', 'Baby, It's Cold Inside', and 'Blood Red Wine'. Ingels was without a doubt E.C.'s top horror man as Wood was the top in science fiction.

It has been said that the horror comics kept E.C. going, as the science fiction comics never made money; this statement has been attributed to the E.C. editors so it must be so. I felt that both types of stories had their own individual merits and as far as I'm concerned, I didn't necessarily have a favorite as far as types go. My favorite E.C. horror story was the one by Ingels that I mentioned above: 'Dying to Lose Weight'. My favorite science fiction story by E.C. was 'Lost in the Microcosm' by Harvy Kurtzman in WEIRD SCIENCE #12 (the first issue, by the way).

E.C.'s method of cronology was at times confusing. The continued success of these comics prompted the addition of several new titles. The E.C. lineup now consisted of the following: TALES FROM THE CRYPT (formerly THE CRYPT OF TERROR), THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE VAULT OF HORROR, CRIME SUSPENSTORIES, TWO FISTED TALES, FRONTLINE COMBAT, SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES, WEIRD FANTASY, and WEIRD SCIENCE. Later, many more titles were added. TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT were war mags for the most part, and Harvy Kurtzman gave up his artwork to become editor on these two. Al Feldstein did likewise on the science fiction books. After a while these books began to degenerate in their story content and upon examination by certain civic groups were restricted from the stands.

E.C. tried several other ideas for comic magazines but only one survived and then went on to become a regular professional type magazine. Of course, I'm speaking of that gem of satirical farse, MAD. This magazine at it is today sells over one and a half million copies per issue.

Over a period of close to thirty year of comic books much has come to pass in the way of art and story, but E.C. in its early days of horror and scieme fiction reached a point of the highest quality. It is unlikely that any comic in the near future will ever surpass the medium E.C., called the new trend.

Next to the title-logo of this article is a picture taken from the cover of THE VAULT OF HORROR #17, by Johnny Craig. The werewolf has long been one of the criterions of the horror story and I think Craig did a fine job on this cover, surely worthy of recognition here in this article. Space prohibite giving credit to many of the fine artistic efforts in the E.C. magazines and several deserve it, I assure you. So, I would like to mention a lineup of some of my favorite E.C. artists: Wally Wood, Graham Ingels, Johnny Severin, Johnny Craig, Reed Crandell, Al Feldstein, Harvy Kurtzman, Jack Davis, Bill Elder, Joe Orlando, Jack Kamen, and George Roussos. I've listed these pretty much in order of my preference, and, perhaps I shouldn't have done this; they were all very fine contributors to the field of comic art. I now would like to take leave of E.C. by expressing my appreciation for the segment of comic book history that they filled. Thanks for a fine effort with your new trend; I know these comics that you turned out have become classics.

Ed Lahmann

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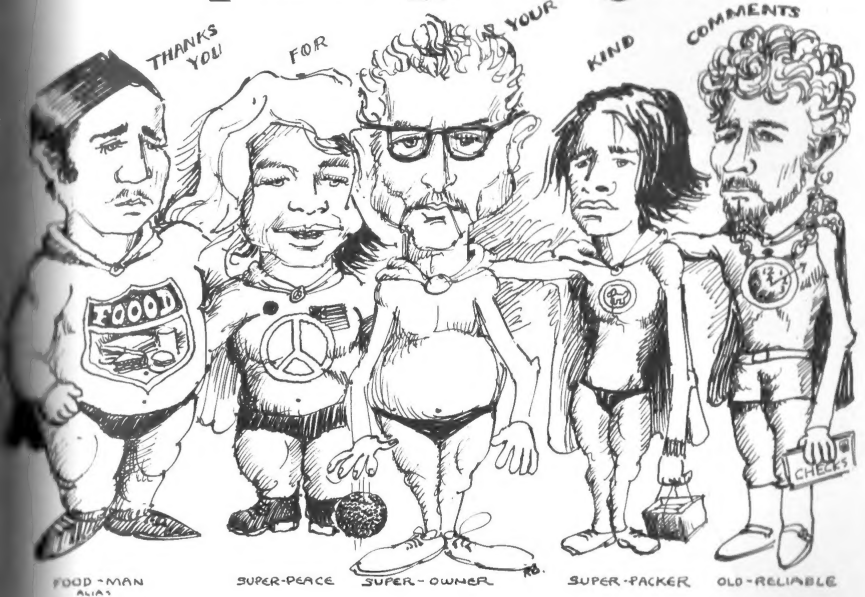

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